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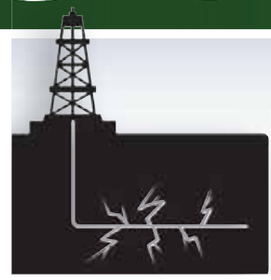

DRILLING INTO CONTROVERSY

IN DAY 2 OF OUR THREE PART SERIES, METRO LOOKS AT WHY PROVINCES ARE PUTTING A HOLD ON FRACKING

PAGE 18-19

Bust sends global birth rates tumbling

The number of babies being born spells economic trouble

PAGE 22

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'A lot of questions' as CBE drops K-9 percentage grades

'Learning journey.'
Do you think new report cards deserve a pass or fail?

JEREMY NOLAIS
jeremy.nolais@metronews.ca

Words like "evident" and "emerging" are out, but so too are percentage marks on Calgary public-school report cards for younger students, a move that left many parents scratching their heads Wednesday.

Officially, Calgary Board of Education report cards for kindergarten to Grade 9 students will be sent home twice a year — some schools currently issue three — will use a four-point numerical indicator in place of more traditional percentage grades and include "stems" identifying what they are expected to know at their current grade level.

For Jennifer Cochran, co-chair of the parent council at Fairview School, it means her two daughters in grades five and seven will no longer score, say, a mark of 85 per cent in math, but instead will get a mark ranging from 1-4. The highest number is classified as "excellent," and followed by "good," "basic," and "not meeting."

Quoted

"It's very airy-fairy. What does it mean? How do the kids even understand what it means to them? It's very important and I don't think the kids' opinion has been taken into consideration."

Jennifer Cochran, parent on CBE's new K-9 report cards

But Cochran was among a swarm of parents to question the changes.

"What's the standard that teachers are going to be grading to?" she asked.

"Is everyone going to be interpreting the levels the same?"

"There's a lot of questions around this. Whereas, if everybody in the class and across the grades had the same test and got a percentage it would show how everybody's doing," she said.

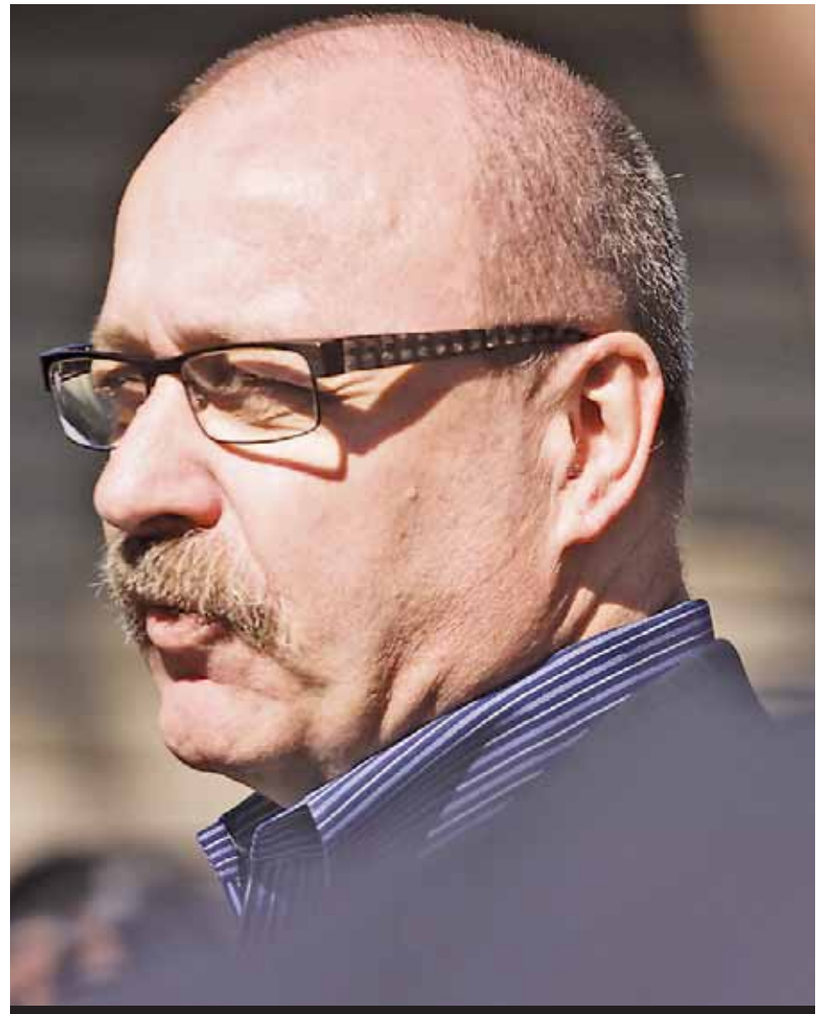
Teacher comments on a student's progress will still be provided to parents, CBE officials said, a change from an original new-style report card that only offered word-based grades like "evident" and "emerging" and no comments at all.

The CBE backed down from that report card in September and pledged to discuss potential changes with parents, teachers and others throughout the school year. Now, with fall 2014-15 on the horizon, it's expected all schools will move towards a uniform assessment practice, according to Superintendent of Learning Services Dennis Parsons.

"We're not talking about what parents are familiar with here ... we're talking about engaging the parents so that parents come to understand, work with us in helping serve their children," he said. "This is about moving forward, this is about being more responsive, this is about reflecting the learning that's happening in our classrooms on a child-by-child basis."

Advantages that would result from the changes were single-form report cards — the CBE's former chief superintendent said last year there were 27 different types being used — as well as an added emphasis for more teacher-to-parent communication through meetings and phone calls, Parsons said.

Follow Jeremy Nolais on Twitter @Metro_Nolais



'ALBERTANS ARE, AND WILL BE, THE BOSS'

Calgary MLA Ric McIver painted himself as a "severely normal" Albertan — a la late former premier Ralph Klein — as he entered the race to become leader of the governing Tories. See story, page 6.

BRYAN WEISMILLER/METRO

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Alison Redford.
Taxpayers paid $173k for unbuilt penthouse

Alberta taxpayers were billed $150,000 just for design concepts on a planned penthouse for former premier Alison Redford, show documents tabled this week in the legislature.

The total bill for all consulting work on the suite, dubbed the "sky palace" by the opposition and media, was just over $173,000.

The documents were tabled Tuesday by former infrastructure minister Ric McIver.

They show that $150,000 was spent on conceptual design, related contract documents, and fittings.

The penthouse was to be on the 11th floor of the Federal Building — a historic structure under renovation that will eventually house offices for all members of the legislature along with other government officials.

McIver has said he learned of it in January, just weeks after taking over the infrastructure portfolio.

He said some of the framing for the suite had already been done. He ordered the existing framing redone to turn the floor into meeting rooms and cancelled the premier's penthouse.

McIver said it wasn't something taxpayers should pay for.

Premier Dave Hancock admitted Wednesday the project went off the rails.

"It wasn't appropriate," said Hancock.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Councillors seek more street sense for signs, crosswalks

Five Calgary councillors are collectively calling for city staff to explore the grounds for adding crosswalks, traffic lights and signs.

Car counts are currently the driving force behind whether traffic control measures get added under what's being portrayed as an inflexible national model.

That doesn't necessarily jive with a more recent policy push toward public transit, cycling and walkability, according to Ward 9 Coun. Gian-Carlo Carra and his four colleagues who've co-authored the notice of motion up for debate Monday.

Carra admits it may sound drab to the layman, but contends it's an important consideration in increasingly car-optional communities.

He cited 9 Ave. and 9 St. corner in Inglewood as an example of where a crosswalk isn't warranted due to the imbalance between pedestrian and vehicle traffic.

"We've had a few pedestrian strikes there," said Carra, adding more people are getting stranded at rush hour because there are no traffic lights.

Inner city Coun. Evan Woolley also suggested there should be more consideration for schools, parks and bike lanes.

Ward 14 Coun. Peter Demong told Metro he's also concerned the algorithm the city uses is a bit of a "black box" at the moment.

"You put the information in and out comes an answer," Demong said.

West side councillors Joe Magliocca and Richard Pootmans have also signed on to the motion.

If approved, administration would have to report back by November 2014.

BRYAN WEISMILLER/METRO
WITH FILES FROM ROBSON FLETCHER

Councillors want stiffer penalties for speeding

Zones below 60 km/h.
Councillors plan to raise the issue formally at May 12 meeting

ROBSON FLETCHER
robson.fletcher@metronews.ca

Fines for driving 65 km/h in a 50-km/h zone should be higher than for driving 115 km/h in a 100-km/h zone, say a group of Calgary councillors who want the Alberta government to change the law.

Coun. Peter Demong said many residents in his ward are "extremely frustrated" by drivers speeding through their neighbourhoods and, the more he looked into the fine structure, the more he figured it "doesn't make sense."

Chance of survival

50%

The chance of a pedestrian surviving an impact from a car travelling at 45 km/h, according to the World Health Organization. That chance improves to 90% for a car travelling at 30 km/h.

"Fifteen kilometres over in a 50 zone is a huge difference compared to 15 kilometres over on a highway," he said.

Demong, along with Couns. Richard Pootmans, Gian-Carlo Carra, and Andre Chabot, plan to introduce a motion at Monday's council meeting asking the city to formally request that the province amend the Traffic Safety Act "to accommodate for higher fines on residential roads of 60 km/h or less."

Sunnyside resident Dale Calkins, who has advocated in the past for 30-km/h speed limits in residential areas, applauded the idea.

"Having stiffer penalties would be very appropriate because, of course, in communities where people live, they're out walking and they're with their families," he said.

"That's not a space for speeding traffic, and it should be very discouraged," Calkins added.

A sign denotes a 40 km/h zone in Calgary. METRO FILE

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Food trucks and inspectors foster healthy relationship

'Learning together.'
No major issues or violations found in this year's inspections

BRYAN WEISMILLER
bryan.weismiller@metronews.ca

Calgary's expanding food-truck fleet is passing more than just than the taste test, according to results from this year's health-and-safety inspections.

No major issues or high-risk violations were found as most of the mobile eateries were put under the microscope earlier this month.

Minor maintenance- and equipment-related infractions were cited, but nothing that warranted charges.

Chief Licence Inspector Kent Pallister noted there was some media scrutiny of health violations in 2012 but contended the results are exceedingly positive.

"Now, in 2014, I believe our food-truck operators are better educated in the health regulations and experienced in what is required, so we are now seeing better results upon inspection," Pallister said.

Red Wagon Diner owner Gabriel Goldberg suggested the standards get "more stringent" every year as owners — and inspectors — get the hang of the street-eats business.

"We're all learning together," said Goldberg.

This year, he added, there's been more emphasis on hot-water supply and window covers to keep pests out during slow periods.

Dr. Richard Musto, Calgary's lead medical officer of health, says food trucks are held to the same standards as their brick-and-mortar counterparts.

"The fact that it's up on wheels instead of the ground really doesn't make a difference," said Musto.

Food trucks are subjected to more stringent health-and-safety rules every year, says Gabriel Goldberg, who owns and operates the Red Wagon Diner unit. METRO FILE

City OKs drug tests for hires in hazardous jobs

New City of Calgary hires who would operate heavy equipment or work in "safety-sensitive" positions will face drug tests under a new policy. METRO FILE

Calgary plans to implement a policy of drug testing prospective employees before hiring them to "safety-sensitive" positions, starting next year, a city spokesperson confirmed.

"We believe, as a public-sector organization, that this program is one more tool we can use to keep citizens and employees safe," Vanessa Farrelly told Metro in an email late Wednesday, after declining to answer questions in detail over the phone.

"These programs are often used in the private sector, in particular in transportation and construction, and are legally defensible."

Farrelly said the decision was made Tuesday by the city's administrative leadership team. The change can be carried out by city administration on its own, she added, and does not require an act of city council.

Mayor Naheed Nenshi told reporters earlier in the week that the plan is "good organizational hygiene" and "the right thing to do."

Farrelly said the next step is to identify all the "safety-sensitive" positions across the city payroll, which are defined as jobs that require "operating a vehicle or equipment, or (being) engaged in a process that has the potential for significant harm to the employee, his or her co-workers or the general public."

Drug testing would not apply to current employees, she noted.

ROBSON FLETCHER/METRO

Enforcement issues

Calgary to free up bottle depots, despite irritation

Some bottle depots have cleaned up their acts but others remain unsightly annoyances to their neighbours, a city committee heard Wednesday, before nevertheless approving a plan to encourage more facilities to open.

The move is aimed at boosting Calgary's lagging return rate of recyclable beverage containers, but several councillors raised concerns about problems created by existing depots.

Coun. Richard Pootmans was the only member of the planning and urban development committee to actually vote against the proposal, saying it didn't do enough to deal with depots that have become noisy eyesores next to residential areas.

"We seem hamstrung; the city's been unable to respond for years," Pootmans said, adding that bylaw enforcement seems "bored" of the issue.

Land-use bylaw coordinator Laurie Kimber said enforcement has been a challenge with some older depots that predate requirements that all beverage containers be stored indoors.

Coun. Andre Chabot, who sits on the Alberta Beverage Container Management Board, said some additional funds have been earmarked for "enhanced enforcement" from the administrative body's point of view.

"We want to create that enhanced opportunity for people to recycle, if at all possible," he said.

ROBSON FLETCHER/METRO

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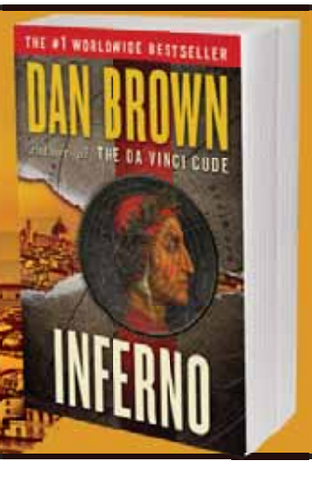

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Tory MLA McIver launches populist campaign for PC leader

Calgary-Hays MLA Ric McIver announces he's running for the top provincial Tory job Wednesday in front of his home in Willow Park.

BRYAN WEISMILLER/METRO

Nominations open May 15. McIver joins Calgary-West MLA Ken Hughes as the only declared candidates

BRYAN WEISMILLER
bryan.weismiller@metronews.ca

Southeast Calgary MLA Ric McIver branded himself a homespun conservative Wednesday as he jumped into the race for leader of the Alberta Progressive Conservative party and premier.

Flanked by "severely normal Albertans" — a nod to the late former premier Ralph Klein — on the front lawn of his suburban Calgary home, McIver vowed to push past recent spending controversies plaguing the government.

"Politics is not about enriching one's self," he said. "It's not about taking fancy planes, it's not about staying in ritzy hotels and it's certainly not about excepting one job because a bigger job isn't available.

"Politics is about getting things done for Albertans."

McIver also referenced the fictitious couple Martha and Henry in his grassroots pitch, which clearly amused Klein's former chief of staff and longtime friend Rod Love.

Love, however, was keen to note his former boss was the man who slayed Alberta's $23-billion debt.

"If we had more Ralph Kleins in this province we wouldn't be in the trouble that we're in," he said in an interview.

McIver was elected to his first term as MLA for Calgary-Hays in April 2012 after spending three terms on city council. He served as Alberta's transportation and infrastructure minister before resigning from the latter post this week.

Repeatedly asked about his cabinet role in the Alison Redford-Dave Hancock government, McIver touted his success in files such as Calgary's south-end ring road projects.

Nominations for the leadership of the Alberta Progressive Conservative Party will open May 15, with the first vote scheduled for September.

McIver joins Calgary-West MLA Ken Hughes as the only declared candidates, although it's widely reported former Calgary MP Jim Prentice will also enter the fray.

Platform

McIver distanced himself from so-called "establishment thinking" through three policies:

- No senior member of his campaign team (or any company they own) would be awarded government contracts.
- "Out of control" pay and perks would be reeled in, such as the more than $316,000 paid annually to Redford's chief of staff.
- Provincial contract holders and workers would be barred from lobbying the governing regime.

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Retired business owner and artist Gary White showcases one of his recent paintings. KEN VAN DE WALLE/FOR METRO

Create! Seniors look to light spark in young artists

In his retirement, Gary White is sharing his passion for painting and art with Calgary youth.

On Wednesday, three young budding artists who take lessons at the local YMCA visited White and others in the Create! group. This offered a chance for the artistic elders to pass on their skill and knowledge.

"I've been artistic ever since my birth, so even as a little boy I started painting and drawing. It was something that was natural to me," said White, a former owner of six businesses in Calgary, including a popular flower shop.

"I've been painting all my life. I've never been in a gallery, I just paint and sell privately."

The members of Create! shared their knowledge and experience with the young artists, and then showcased their artistic creations and what they have done with them. At the end, each of the kids got a special handmade gift from the members.

"I'm hoping to create a spark, just a little smoulder, and see what happens," said White.

Create! is a group of seniors that meets at the Golden Age Club weekly in Calgary's southeast. It focuses on a variety of art projects as well as shaping a creative community amongst its members.

KEN VAN DE WALLE/FOR METRO

Crime. Two men charged in strangulation death

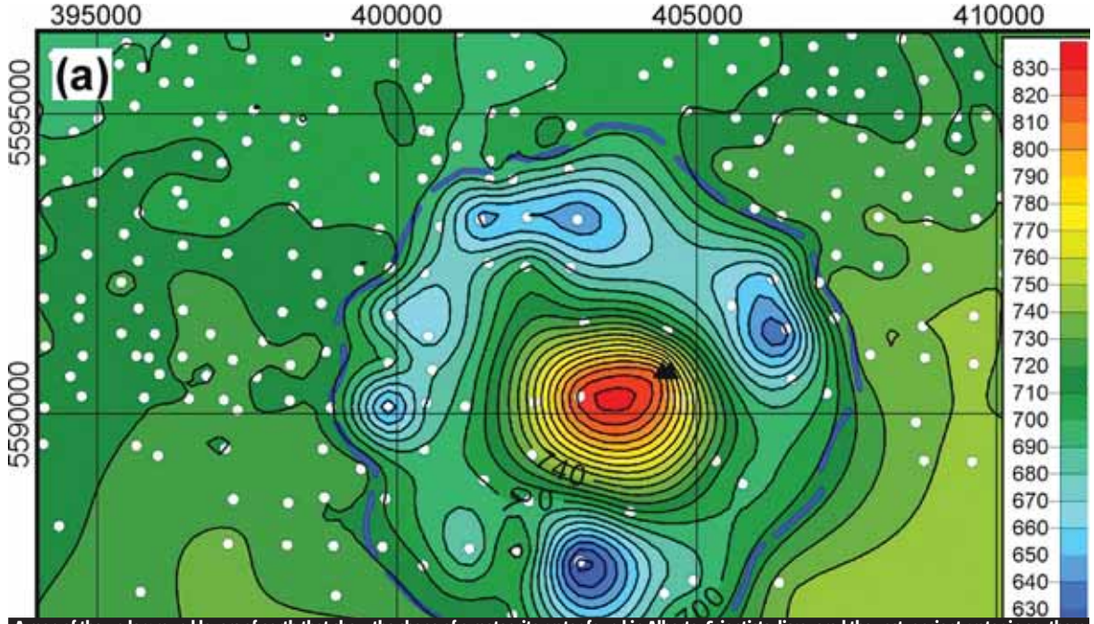
Calgary police have arrested and charged two men with first-degree murder in the January killing of a third man, whom investigators now say was strangled.

Dennis Barreira, 46, was found unconscious inside a home in the 2000 block of 27 Street SE on Jan. 19.

Police deemed the incident a homicide at the time but didn't immediately release the cause of death.

Investigators now say Barreira was strangled after two men came to the house to rob him of drugs and cash. At least one of the men was known to him, according to police.

On Tuesday, officers arrested Earl Pate-Miller, 21, and Chad William Brian Mondoux, 24, both of Calgary. Each was charged with first-degree murder on Wednesday. METRO



A map of the underground layers of earth that show the shape of a meteorite crater found in Alberta. Scientists discovered the vast, ancient crater in southern Alberta. HANDOUT/UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Meteorite thought to be behind ancient crater

Science. Geologist found massive hole by accident during routine mapping

Scientists have discovered a vast, ancient meteorite crater in southern Alberta.

Doug Schmitt, a University of Alberta researcher, says some time 50 million to 70 million years ago, a huge chunk of space debris at least the size of an apartment block crashed into marshy, subtropical plains near what is now the hamlet of Bow City.

It left a hole up to two-and-a-half kilometres deep and eight kilometres wide. The blast would have been 200 times stronger than the most powerful nuclear device ever detonated, so intense that anything alive within 200 kilometres would have received first-degree burns.

But after eons of erosion, so little is left of the crater that it had to be discovered by accident, Schmitt said.

"It's buried," he said. "There isn't a lot to see."

A geologist was doing some routine mapping of underground layers a few metres beneath the surface when he noticed something unusual.

"He noted there was a circular kind of disturbance, but it was completely covered."

Schmitt said his lab was called in. Using seismic data from industry to create a complete image of the feature, they realized it was most likely to be an impact crater, complete with a central peak where the meteorite would have struck. The size of the object can only be estimated.

A meteorite composed mostly of iron would have had to have been 300 to 500 metres in diameter to create that size of a crater. If the meteorite was rock, it would have had to have been a kilometre across.

Schmitt said the discovery brings a rare opportunity to study the floor of an impact crater.

"We're able to get at the lower parts of (a crater) and see how rocks have been moved around."

His team is now looking for certain types of minerals that form only under certain conditions so as to confirm the crater is from a meteor impact. But he doesn't have much doubt.

"We're pretty confident it can only be a meteorite impact. It's pretty clear."

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Former minister of advanced education Thomas Lukaszuk METRO FILE

Province won't review university exec pay

Hefty offerings.
U of C, U of A prez contracts among biggest in country

Alberta's post-secondary ministry has withdrawn a pledge from its former top official to review hefty contracts being ponied up for university executives.

In October 2013, then-Advanced Education Minister Thomas Lukaszuk told Metro a review would be launched "very shortly" into whether top-level compensation was fair.

"I firmly believe that public-sector employees are not in the same ballpark as executives of publicly traded or privately owned companies," Lukaszuk said at the time, referring specifically to a claim from University of Alberta president Indira Samarasekera that her $529,000 annually salary was comparable to what she would receive in the private sector.

"If the CEO of Suncor is making millions with stock options, that doesn't mean individuals of equal calibre in the public sector should be getting paid the same amount."

On Monday, Metro reported first on details of a new, five-year deal inked for University of Calgary president Elizabeth Cannon. All told, she could net in excess of $600,000 annually in base, incentive and allowance pay and is also guaranteed an end-of-term payout worth more than $950,000.

Cannon would also be entitled to a senior-level pension and research funding if requested.

But a statement from Alberta Advanced Education spokesperson John Muir said that "our institutions are independently board governed and we trust they're making the appropriate decisions for their institutions and their own situations."

"We expect all post-secondary institutions to manage their finances appropriately within their funding envelope," Muir added. "We won't be pursuing a review at this time."

JEREMY NOLAIS/METRO

2014 Calgary Stampede

Nashville North lineup announced

Big-time country stars like Aaron Pritchett, the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band and Gordon Bamford will be among the headliners taking to the Nashville North stage during this year's Calgary Stampede.

"We are thrilled to present our strongest country music lineup ever, on what has become a legendary performance stage for both new talent as well as seasoned country music artists," says Lindsay Ell, production manager.

The full lineup was rolled out Wednesday and also includes The Road Hammers, George Fox and Brett Kissel.

The Nashville North tent is open from July 3-13. METRO

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U of A Hospital

Alberta to investigate how accused murderer escaped guard in Edmonton

Alberta Solicitor General Jonathan Denis has launched an investigation into how an accused first-degree murderer under guard in hospital managed to escape.

Denis says Christopher Nagel was free for about five hours in Edmonton's University of Alberta Hospital.

He says the 36-year-old was able to escape when the guard let him go to the washroom.

"His restraints were removed at that time and he went into the washroom alone. A few minutes later the officer checked the inmate and he was gone," Denis said. "There was a second door in the washroom and the inmate apparently left though it."

Nagel was later discovered hiding three floors up and taken into custody without incident.

He was charged on Sunday with first-degree murder in the death of his wife Rienna Nagel, and now faces a charge of escaping lawful custody.

Rienna Nagel was found dead Saturday in a home in Spruce Grove, just west of Edmonton and her husband was taken to hospital at that time with unspecified injuries.

Denis apologized for the escape.

"This inmate should not have been allowed to escape from the correctional officers — period," he said. "This simply should not have happened."

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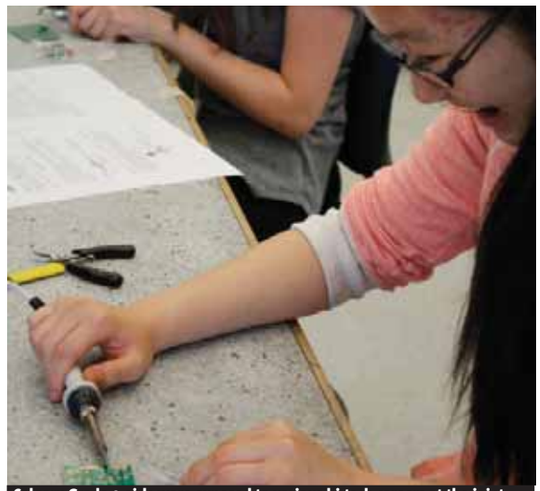

Calgary Grade 9 girls were exposed to various hi-tech careers at the joint university Explore IT event. KEN VAN DE WALLE/FOR METRO

The IT girls: City students get wired

Workshops. Event opens electronic window of opportunity

KEN VAN DE WALLE
calgary@metronews.ca

Calgary Grade 9 student Kayla Lott had her eyes opened by the tech possibilities in workshops sponsored by city universities.

More than 600 grade nine girls gathered at SAIT, the University of Calgary, and Mount Royal University for Explore IT — a joint effort to expose young girls to possible technology career choices though the use of fun, interactive workshops.

Students were shown a wide array of IT applications, including game development, architectural design, IT troubleshooting and graphic design, among others.

Lott, one of the students participating at SAIT, said she found interests in areas she previously thought she never would.

"My friends told me that it helped them choose what they want to do, and I thought it might help me figure out what I want to do," said Lott.

"And so far it has been opening my eyes to things I didn't even want to do in the first place."

Nearly half of the 600 program attendees were taking in SAIT's tech offerings, providing the girls with a window into a future hi-tech career.

"The message we want to give them is you can be anything you want, do anything you want to do without being intimidated," said Mo Keshavjee, SAIT's Explore IT organizer.

But you want to do now, right?

"It has been opening my eyes to things I didn't even want to do in the first place."

Grade 9 student, Kayla Lott

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Northeastern Nigeria.
Extremist Islamic group kills hundreds of people

Islamic militants who have triggered international outrage over the kidnapping of more than 270 Nigerian schoolgirls opened fire on a busy marketplace, killing hundreds in a new spasm of violence in the country's northeast.

The attack escalates Nigeria's growing crisis from a campaign of bombings, massacres and abductions being waged by the Boko Haram terrorist network in its campaign to impose an Islamic state on Africa's most populous nation.

As many as 300 people were killed in the assault late Monday on the town of Gamboru Ngala on Nigeria's border with Cameroon. The extremists opened fire on a marketplace bustling with shoppers, then rampaged through the town for 12 hours, setting houses ablaze and shooting those who tried to escape.

The attack and hundreds of casualties were confirmed by Borno state information commissioner Mohammed Bulama.

Outrage over the missing girls and the government's failure to rescue them brought angry Nigerian protesters into the streets this week.

Boko Haram has tried to root out Western influence by targeting schools, as well as attacking churches, mosques, government buildings and security forces in the country of 170 million, divided between a predominantly Christian south and Muslim north.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Extremist violence

"Now all Nigerians feel they are involved. Civil society is beginning to coalesce over the plight of the kidnapped girls and in opposition to the violence by Boko Haram and to abuses committed by the military."

Elizabeth Donnelly, Nigeria Analyst at the Chatham House

Canada pledges to help find kidnapped girls

'Repugnant act.'
Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird said that the Canadian government will supply Nigeria with surveillance equipment

In the messy world of competing international interests, Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird decided Wednesday that the fate of hundreds of abducted teenage girls in Nigeria would come before all else.

Baird pledged Canada's unwavering support to help free the female students abducted by the Boko Haram rebel group, a tragedy that has now gripped the world.

Canada will supply surveillance equipment to help Nigeria find the girls, even though it has long-standing concerns about the country's human rights record, the Harper government said Wednesday.

Women attend a demonstration Tuesday calling on the government to rescue the kidnapped girls in Abuja, Nigeria. SUNDAY ALAMBA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Baird added that loans of Canadian military hardware to Nigeria would be accompanied by Canadian military personnel to operate it.

"We obviously would have concerns, with Nigeria, with their human rights record and many issues," he said.

Without mentioning it specifically, Baird appeared to be referencing Nigeria's relatively new law that further criminalizes homosexuality. The Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Act criminalizes homosexual clubs and organizations, and carries a maximum 14-year prison term.

On Wednesday, Baird made clear there was no way Canada would agree to Nigeria's original request to turn over "millions" of dollars in military hardware without strings attached.

That said, Canada wants to do everything it can to help rescue the hundreds of girls aged 12 to 15 who were kidnapped by Islamic militants from a school in Nigeria three weeks ago, Baird said.

"I think that is what has captivated the attention of Canadians and frankly people around the world that are just horrified at this repugnant act," said Baird.

Nigeria has been fighting Boko Haram for five years, during which time it has claimed the lives of thousands.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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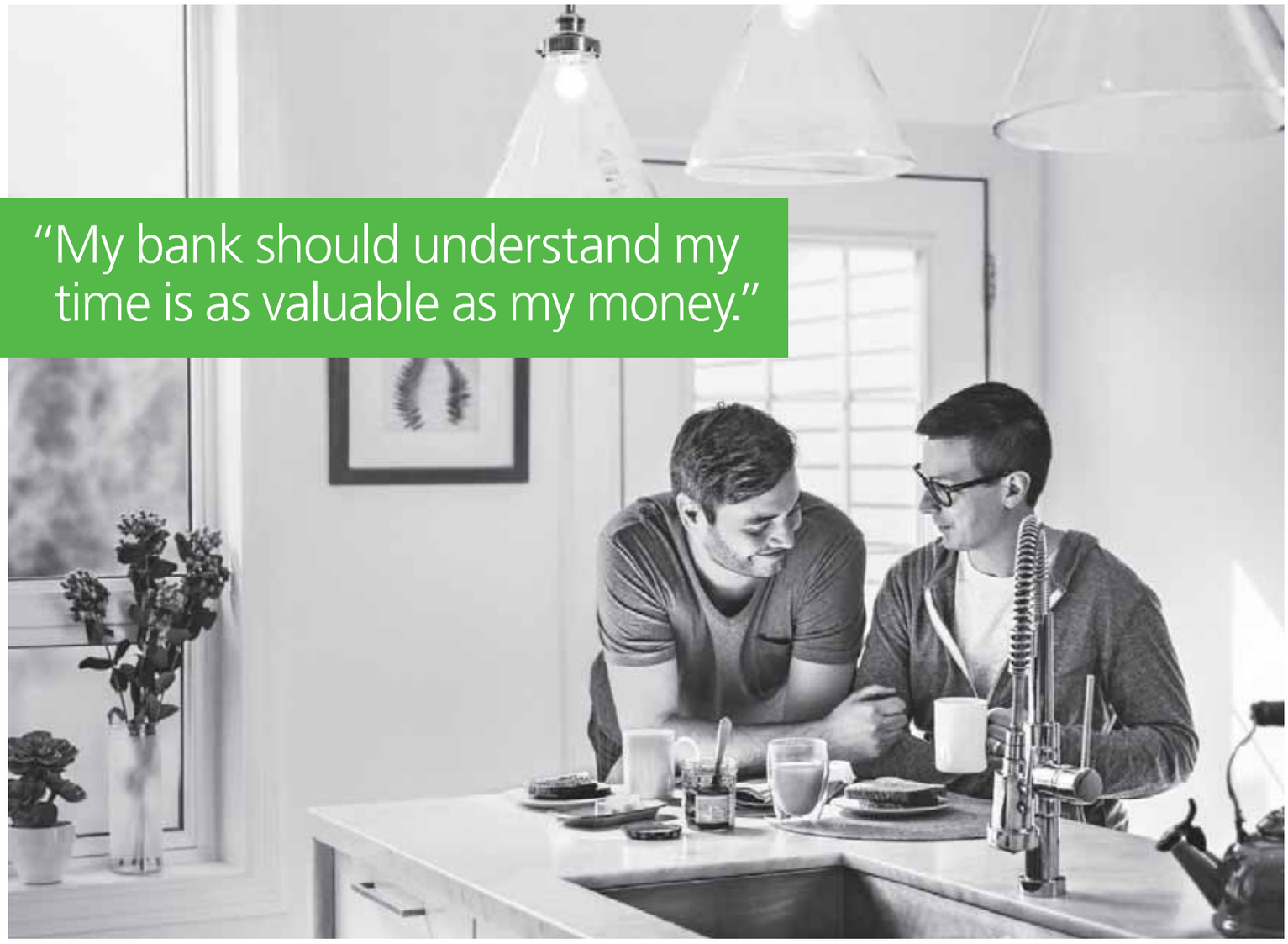

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Coupland's honour is selfie-explanatory

Author Douglas Coupland snaps a selfie as he is made an Officer of the Order of Canada by Governor General David Johnston during a ceremony at Rideau Hall in Ottawa on Wednesday. The selfie was later posted on Coupland's Twitter feed. SEAN KILPATRICK/THE CANADIAN PRESS; INSET: TWITTER

Is Ford getting help, or was he getting Timbits?

Rob & Doug McFrenzy. Storm of speculation about whereabouts of Toronto mayor fuelled by student's alleged doughnut-shop sighting

JESSICA SMITH CROSS
Metro in Toronto

Toronto Mayor Rob Ford
CHRIS YOUNG/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Grade 11 student Cayla Clarkson says she didn't know Rob Ford was supposed to be in rehab when she spotted him in a Tim Hortons parking lot and tweeted about it on Tuesday — fuelling the storm of speculation about the mayor's whereabouts.

Clarkson said she saw Ford get out of his car and walk into the doughnut shop in Toronto wearing a "full black suit" and walk out again wearing a grey sweatsuit.

"He opened the door to the backseat of his car," said Clarkson. "I had my phone out because I was going to take a picture and he looked at me, like he did not seem happy, he didn't seem pleased. So I just put my phone down.

"When he closed his door, he sort of looked at me again, did a once-over, and that's why I walked away," she said. "I just felt a little uncomfortable."

Doug Ford told reporters at city hall Wednesday it was actually him at the Tim Hortons, and he'd stopped by on his way to council to take pictures with people and hand out T-shirts.

"I think he's just trying to cover for his brother," Clarkson said. "He said he was handing out T-shirts and taking pictures, but I did not see him handing out T-shirts or taking pictures at all. He wasn't interacting with anybody, I didn't seem him talking to anyone." she said.

International review

Global study to look at Canada's polar bear trade

Environment Minister Leona Aglukkaq says she is confident that a new international review of Canada's trade in polar bear parts will reaffirm this country's conservation of the species.

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species will look at the practices of all five polar bear range states, although Canada is the only country that permits commercial trade in polar bears. **THE CANADIAN PRESS**

I am your robber

Cops to suspect: I have you now

Vancouver police didn't travel to a galaxy far, far away to arrest Darth Vader.

Sgt. Randy Fincham says police responded Tuesday to a robbery involving a suspect wearing a Vader mask. The victim was unhurt, but her attacker escaped with a small amount of cash.

A 911 call led police to a suspect, who was not far away and still wearing the mask. **THE CANADIAN PRESS**

Man's best bud. B.C. tops list for marijuana-related insurance claims for pets

It seems our furry friends are living the high life in B.C. — but not in a good way.

B.C. ranks No. 1 in North America for the most pet insurance claims relating to marijuana toxicity, according to new data from pet insurance provider Trupanion.

Over the past two years, Trupanion has paid $22,500 in insurance claims to pet owners in B.C., almost half of the total $54,000 paid across the U.S. and Canada, spokeswoman Britta Gidican told Metro.

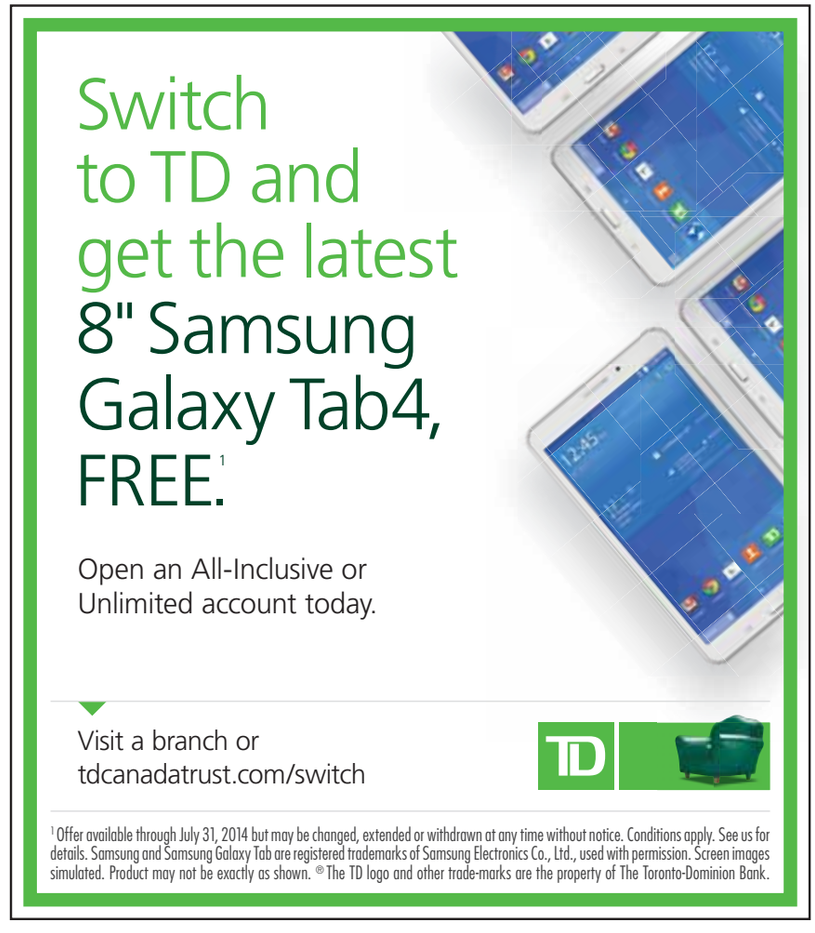
California and Washington ranked second and third on the list of 10 regions across North America, while Alberta and Ontario came in fourth and sixth, respectively.

Dr. Kathy Kramer, a veterinarian at the Vancouver Animal Wellness Hospital, said she wasn't surprised to see B.C. top the list.

"Marijuana here is just so prevalent," she said. "You can get it legally, you can get it illegally just about anywhere in the city."

Although medical marijuana use for pets is a growing trend in Vancouver, Kramer said the high rates of pet insurance claims relating to marijuana toxicity in B.C. are usually the result of animals accidentally consuming their owner's marijuana. **THANDI FLETCHER/METRO IN VANCOUVER**

B.C. bud from a Vancouver dispensary. METRO FILE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Mudslide-stricken villages await relief

Abi Barik, Afghanistan.
President pledges to help province rebuild following devastating mudslide

A child plays near the site of Friday's landslide that buried the village of Abi Barik in Badakhshan province, northeastern Afghanistan, Wednesday.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Afghan President Hamid Karzai on Wednesday toured the site of last week's horrific landslide in the country's remote northeast, pledging to provide relief to families displaced by the disaster that killed hundreds of people.

Karzai's office said he met the victims in the village of Abi Barik in Badakhshan province, where around 700 families were forced to flee their homes due to the possibility of further landslides and flooding.

During the visit, Karzai spoke with villagers being housed in tents and also promised to rebuild homes for the landslide's survivors.

Aid groups and the government have rushed to the remote province bordering Tajikistan and China with food, shelter and water. But those affected have complained that help has been slow to arrive.

Authorities have yet to provide an exact figure on the number of people killed in the May 2 landslide, and estimates have ranged from 250 to 2,700. Officials say it will be impossible to dig up all the bodies buried deep under a sea of mud.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Lhokbani, Indonesia

Rape victim faces lawful beating

An Indonesian woman who was gang-raped may be caned publicly for violating Islamic law.

The 25-year-old widow said she was raped by eight men who allegedly found her with a married man.

The Islamic Shariah law office in the district has recommended she and the married man be caned nine times.

Police have arrested three men.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Providence, R.I.

Fallen acrobats may walk again

Two women among eight who fell during a circus performance in Rhode Island have spinal cord injuries and time will tell whether they will walk again.

It may be a year or two before it's clear whether they'll walk again.

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Putin says troops pulled back, wants referendum postponed

Ukraine crisis. Pro-Russia militants say they will carry out planned vote Sunday

Russia has pulled back its troops from the Ukrainian border, Vladimir Putin told diplomats Wednesday as he urged insurgents in southeast Ukraine to postpone their planned referendum Sunday on autonomy.

In a Moscow meeting with Swiss president Didier Burkhalter, Putin said the Russian troops have been pulled back to their training grounds and locations for "regular exercises," but didn't specify whether those locations were in areas near Ukraine.

Putin also called on Ukraine's military to halt all operations against pro-Russia activists who have seized government buildings and police stations in at least a dozen towns in eastern Ukraine.

Ukraine launched a government offensive late last week to take back buildings and towns under control of the insurgents. At least 35 people, including many rebels, have died in that offensive, the government said.

Many had feared that Sunday's vote on more autonomy would be a flashpoint for further violence between the rebels and Ukrainian troops in the east. Despite Putin's comments, pro-Russia militants said they would still carry out the referendum on Sunday.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A bouquet sits atop the burnt-out shell of a car at a location north of Slovyansk, Ukraine, Wednesday where clashes between pro-Russia gunmen and the Ukrainian army took place. MANU BRABO/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Taking a toll

Sanctions hurting Europe?

Sanctions against Russia are taking a toll in Europe as well, figures showed Wednesday.

U.S. Treasury Undersecretary David Cohen, in Paris as part of the Obama administration's push to bolster European support for broader sanctions, acknowledged that the measures are also inflicting pain on companies in the United States and especially Europe, whose banks and energy firms have deep Russian interests.

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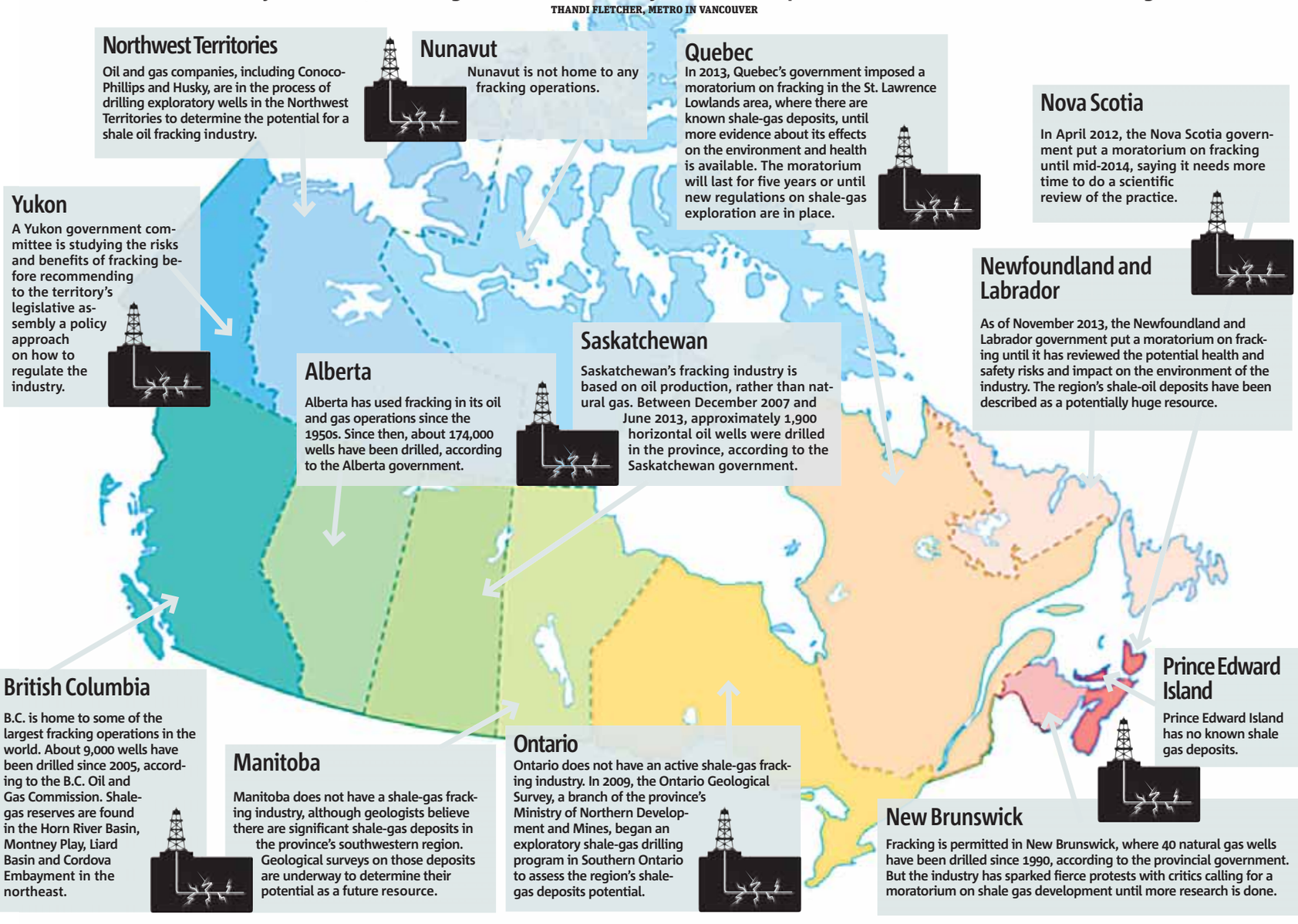
Tracking Canadian fracking

Metro's look at the controversial practice of fracking continues with Day 2 of our three-day feature. While it's booming in B.C., other provinces have been more cautious, imposing moratoriums until there's more evidence on its health-and-safety effects. Many countries, including France and Germany, have also imposed bans or moratoriums on fracking.

THANDI FLETCHER, METRO IN VANCOUVER



Northwest Territories
Oil and gas companies, including ConocoPhillips and Husky, are in the process of drilling exploratory wells in the Northwest Territories to determine the potential for a shale oil fracking industry.

Nunavut
Nunavut is not home to any fracking operations.

Quebec
In 2013, Quebec's government imposed a moratorium on fracking in the St. Lawrence Lowlands area, where there are known shale-gas deposits, until more evidence about its effects on the environment and health is available. The moratorium will last for five years or until new regulations on shale-gas exploration are in place.

Nova Scotia
In April 2012, the Nova Scotia government put a moratorium on fracking until mid-2014, saying it needs more time to do a scientific review of the practice.

Yukon
A Yukon government committee is studying the risks and benefits of fracking before recommending to the territory's legislative assembly a policy approach on how to regulate the industry.

Newfoundland and Labrador
As of November 2013, the Newfoundland and Labrador government put a moratorium on fracking until it has reviewed the potential health and safety risks and impact on the environment of the industry. The region's shale-oil deposits have been described as a potentially huge resource.

Alberta
Alberta has used fracking in its oil and gas operations since the 1950s. Since then, about 174,000 wells have been drilled, according to the Alberta government.

Saskatchewan
Saskatchewan's fracking industry is based on oil production, rather than natural gas. Between December 2007 and June 2013, approximately 1,900 horizontal oil wells were drilled in the province, according to the Saskatchewan government.

British Columbia
B.C. is home to some of the largest fracking operations in the world. About 9,000 wells have been drilled since 2005, according to the B.C. Oil and Gas Commission. Shale-gas reserves are found in the Horn River Basin, Montney Play, Liard Basin and Cordova Embayment in the northeast.

Manitoba
Manitoba does not have a shale-gas fracking industry, although geologists believe there are significant shale-gas deposits in the province's southwestern region. Geological surveys on those deposits are underway to determine their potential as a future resource.

Ontario
Ontario does not have an active shale-gas fracking industry. In 2009, the Ontario Geological Survey, a branch of the province's Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, began an exploratory shale-gas drilling program in Southern Ontario to assess the region's shale-gas deposits potential.

Prince Edward Island
Prince Edward Island has no known shale gas deposits.

New Brunswick
Fracking is permitted in New Brunswick, where 40 natural gas wells have been drilled since 1990, according to the provincial government. But the industry has sparked fierce protests with critics calling for a moratorium on shale gas development until more research is done.

The industry

Concerns and safety

After nearly a decade on the inside of what was once B.C.'s largest natural gas company, Robert Falls is well aware of some people's wariness of the oil and gas industry.

"It's very much in our nature to characterize them as arrogant or uncaring or evil," he said. "If you're Joe Public and you're looking at that industry, it's huge, it's powerful, it's ... intimidating."

But, in his experience, that assessment is simply not fair. Energy companies are concerned about the environment, and the health and safety of people living near oil and gas operation sites, he said. It's in their best interests to make it a priority or they wouldn't be able to keep operating, he said.

But, Falls said, despite the industry's best efforts to reduce the risk of disaster, things can and do go wrong. He believes energy companies need to do a better job of mitigating that risk and listening to the public's concerns.

A Green Light for Safety

During his tenure in the 1990s as manager of the environment division of Westcoast Energy, now operating as Spectra, Falls said his team had the green light to do "whatever had to be done" to safeguard the health and safety of people in the communities in which they operated.

"I don't think people realize how much time, effort and money is spent on managing environmental, health and safety issues," he said.

That sentiment is echoed by industry leaders, who claim the health and safety of residents living near fracking sites is a top concern.

Andy Calitz, chief executive officer for LNG Canada, the entity behind a proposed liquefied natural gas project in the northwestern B.C. town of Kitimat, said energy companies are constantly studying fracking and its impact on water and air quality.

The environment

"Are there concerns? Yes, we are at all times sensitive to our environmental impact."

Andy Calitz, chief executive officer for LNG Canada

"Are there concerns? Yes, we are at all times very sensitive to our environmental impact," he said. "It is high on our agenda."

Geoff Morrison, manager of B.C. operations for the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, said the organization is trying to do a better job of assuring the public about the industry's practices.

"We recognize there is a broad concern about an

Tricks of the gas trade

Fracking 101. Northern Lights College in B.C. teaches students the ins and outs of working the fields — and staying safe

EMILY JACKSON
Metro in Vancouver

Stacy Smith is the dean of a program at Northern Lights College that trains field operators and power engineers. MATT KIELTYKA/METRO

The best time to frack is in the dead of winter.

Temperatures drop to -45 C, but to drill to gas trapped in shale in Northeastern British Columbia's Montney Play, rigs must be set up when the region's swampy muskeg is frozen so they don't sink.

Some city dwellers have perceptions that natural gas is a fast way to riches. Who can blame them? With the government promising billions in royalties from extracting gas and shipping it to yet-to-be-built liquefied natural gas (LNG) plants on the coast and then to Asia.

But that simply isn't the case.

"It's not a quick buck," explains Stacy Smith, program chair of trades at the Northern Lights College, during a tour of the simulated wellsite at the Fort St. John campus. Smith is the dean of a program that trains field operators and power engineers to drill, operate and monitor wells. Safety is his top goal.

"A huge amount of time and skill goes into making sure the gas is safe to move and use for everybody — it is not a simple process."

Yet it's the process that will power B.C.'s push for LNG plants. For every billion spent on the LNG facilities, $3.86 billion will be spent upstream, according to Fort St. John, B.C., mayor Lori Ackerman.

Not much is known about the long-term effects of fracking, a technology that dates back to the 1950s but exploded in use since 2000. But concerns are mounting about chemicals seeping into groundwater, methane escaping into the air, seismic activity and flaring of sour gas.

What they learn

Natural gas is one of the cleanest burning fossil fuels, but it's tough to get to, Smith says as he walks through the facility where, annually, 48 students train.

It requires a massive amount of energy. Once a well is drilled deep enough and sealed with concrete to prevent ground water contamination, water, sand and chemicals are pumped down to horizontally fracture the land and release the shale gas.

The gas bubbles up to a wellhead with pressure monitors and an emergency shut down valve. It can be "pretty nasty" when it comes out of the ground — if it contains hydrogen sulphide, it can kill. It can't be cleaned up. Instead, it's burned off in a process known as flaring.

Students learn to remove the hydrogen sulphide and to dehumidify the gas. After these processes, the product is mostly methane and ready to sell.

Why we frack

"It's the nature of the beast, it's the only way to access the shale gas," Smith says.

Some regions, including Quebec, have banned fracking.

"They don't want to take the chance, I think, to have the contamination potentially happen," he said.

But it's riskier in places with shallow shale formations, also known as plays. B.C.'s plays are deep — between 1,700 and 4,000 metres below the surface — compared to Quebec's (500 to 3,300 metres deep), according to the National Energy Board.

There are strict regulations around sealing wells to ensure chemicals don't leak into the ground water.

"The people that are up here, they're just like me and you. They're family people, they have kids, they don't want to see their water contaminated."

What can go wrong

"It's like anything that can go wrong," Smith said, especially operations involving massive machinery with moving parts.

Sometimes it's circumstances, sometimes there's a flaw that's missed, sometimes it's human error.

Technology improves safety, he says, pointing to emergency shut down valves that close automatically or electric monitors that alert a production facility immediately if something is wrong.

"As much as it kind of runs smoothly, there's always glitches that happen all the time, so somebody has to be there to fix them," he said. "Things break."

On opportunities

There's a two-year waitlist to get into the program, where graduates can expect starting salaries of $65,000 a year plus a healthy dose of overtime.

Even though job prospects are good, a lot hinges on the expected demand from the LNG plants.

"Everybody's sort of in this holding pattern, you know, kind of waiting," he said.

industrial process people aren't familiar (with) or is new to them," he said.

"Things Do Go Awry"

Still, Falls said the industry is not perfect. During his seven years at Westcoast Energy, Falls recalls one pipeline rupture — a sour gas leak near Fort Nelson, B.C. Fortunately, it was "very small," he said, and was quickly brought under control.

But the incident still underscores the risks associated with the industry, he said. "It doesn't matter how many studies have been done or how thoroughly they have been undertaken," he said. "Things do go awry."

"It's Not Going to Go Away"

Falls encouraged residents of communities where fracking is taking place to "ask the hard questions" to companies about emergency preparedness plans. But the industry also needs to do a better job at listening to community concerns, he said.

That's more important than ever, he said, as demand for fossil energy continues to rise. Even if there were to be strong public pushback against gas development in B.C., "that wouldn't change what the world is going to do," he said.

"If we don't supply it, somebody else is going to supply. We have to get better and we have to continuously improve because it's not going away."

THANDI FLETCHER/METRO IN VANCOUVER, WITH FILES FROM CAM TUCKER

MORE IN OUR FRACKING SERIES

Friday

- **Cautionary tale.** Alberta ranchers warn British Columbia to heed warnings.

Online

- **Photo and map.** Stacy Smith takes us on a tour.

In pictures

1 Covering up. What's a wellhead?

Heavy-duty wellheads are placed atop holes after drilling is complete. The blue attachment on the right is an emergency shutdown valve that cuts off the gas supply in case of a fault in the system. ALL PHOTOS MATT KIELTYKA/METRO

2 Expensive operation. Rigs

This $6-million rig uses a kelly drive to bore into the earth and get to the shale gas. It used to be operational, but companies donated it to the Northern Lights College wellsite training facility.

3 Getting it out. Jacks that pump

A pump jack helps move oil out of the ground if there's not enough pressure for it to flow naturally.

4 Fine balance. Reading wellheads

Field operators measure pressure readings on wellheads to ensure it isn't too high (could indicate a potential explosion) or too low, which means the gas won't move through the pipelines.

5 The final step. Removing the deadly stuff

Once gas comes out of the ground, it must go through a variety of buildings and pipes to remove any deadly hydrogen sulphide and to be dehumidified.

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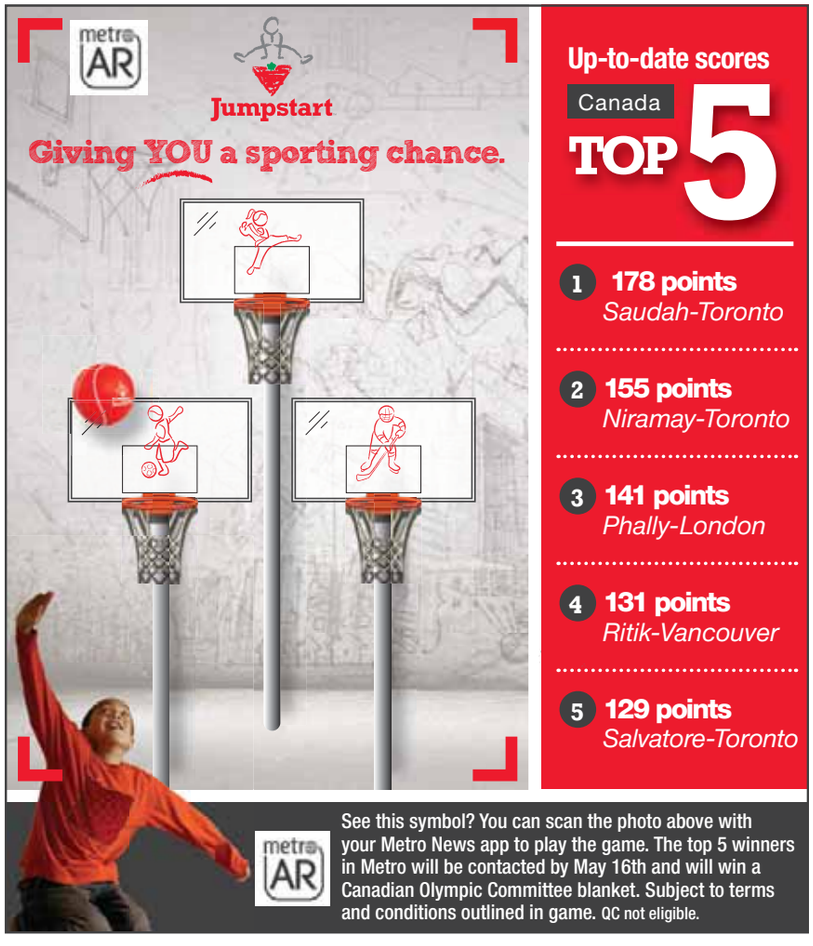
Scan this and watch a ROM expert on their whale bone recovery project

"There's nothing on Earth that I've ever encountered that smells worse than a dead whale." Scan the photo above with your Metro News app to watch a video of the Royal Ontario Museum's Mark Engstrom discussing how the museum's whale bone recovering project will work — and likely take two years to complete. The museum in Toronto will help preserve the skeletons of two beached blue whales that washed ashore on the west coast of Newfoundland, including the rotting blue whale seen here on the shore in Trout River, N.L. in this April 27 photo. CONTRIBUTED - NTV NEWS, DON BRADSHAW/THE CANADIAN PRESS FILE



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Opponents of abortion can't run as Liberals

Justin Trudeau. It's a pro-choice party; they don't want the debate reopened; sitting anti-abortion MPs will be allowed to run

Justin Trudeau says opponents of abortion need not apply to run for the Liberal party in the next election.

And if they do apply, the Liberal leader says they'll be weeded out during the vetting process for nomination applications.

Trudeau says the Liberals now support abortion rights and all candidates in the next election will be expected to adhere to that position.

However, he says an exception is being made for incumbent opponents of abortion who became MPs before the party officially adopted a pro-choice stance, such as Toronto MPs John McKay and Judy Sgro.

Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau during question period. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Their beliefs will be "respected to a certain extent," Trudeau said, "but our position as a party is we do not reopen that debate."

Until two years ago, Liberals did not have a party position on abortion, considering it a matter of conscience.

As a result, Liberal MPs opposed to abortion formed a strong, vocal minority in the caucus although their ranks have thinned considerably over the last two elections, as the caucus itself shrank.

But Trudeau said: "As a party, we are steadfast in our belief ... that it is not for any government to legislate what a woman chooses to do with her body, and that is the bottom line there."

At their 2012 national convention, delegates approved a resolution that explicitly endorsed a woman's right to choose — adopting the same position long held by the NDP. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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No baby boom after the bust this time

Birth of fear. As with the Great Depression, after the Great Recession in 2008, the birth rate fell around the world and it has yet to recover

The financial crisis that followed the collapse of U.S. investment bank Lehman Brothers in 2008 did more than wipe out billions in wealth and millions of jobs. It also sent birth rates tumbling around the world as couples found themselves too short of money or too fearful about their finances to have children. Six years later, birth rates haven't bounced back.

For those who fear an overcrowded planet, this is good news. For the economy, not so good.

We tend to think economic growth comes from working harder and smarter. But economists attribute up to a third of it to more people joining the workforce each year than leaving it. The result is more producing, earning and spending.

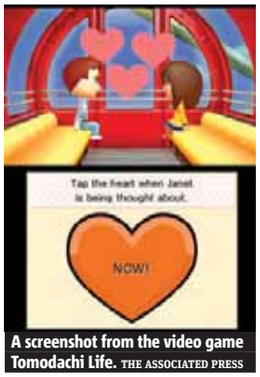
Now this secret fuel of the economy, rarely missing and little noticed, is running out.

"For the first time since World War II, we're no longer getting a tailwind," says Russ Koesterich, chief investment strategist at BlackRock, the world's largest money manager. "You're going to create fewer jobs … wage growth will be slower."

Births are falling in China, Japan, the U.S., Germany, Italy and nearly all other European countries. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

In this 1930 file photo, a nurse holds a baby in Philadelphia. When the economy falls, like it did in the '30s and 2008, the birth rate also falls. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Gay rights. Nintendo will not add gay avatars



A screenshot from the video game Tomodachi Life. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Nintendo isn't allowing gamers to play as gay in an upcoming life simulator game.

The publisher of such gaming franchises as The Legend of Zelda and Mario Bros. said Tuesday it wouldn't bow to pressure to allow players to engage in romantic activities with characters of the same sex in English editions of Tomodachi Life. This follows a social media campaign launched by fans last month seeking virtual equality for the game's characters, which are modeled after real people.

"Nintendo never intended to make any form of social commentary with the launch of Tomodachi Life," Nintendo of America Inc. said in a statement. "The relationship options in the game represent a playful alternate world rather than a real-life simulation. We hope that all of our fans will see that Tomodachi Life was intended to be a whimsical and quirky game, and that we were absolutely not trying to provide social commentary."

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An unmovable feast in India

Indian labourers sort mangoes at a fruit market in Hyderabad, India, Wednesday. Mangoes start arriving in Indian markets in April, providing a juicy, delicious respite from summer temperatures and humidity as they start climbing to oppressive levels. Indians are feasting on some of the world's most succulent mangoes after the European Union banned imports of the fruit from India this month, producing a glut and rock-bottom prices for local consumers.

MAHESH KUMAR A./THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Watching habits

Are you reading this as you watch a YouTube clip?

Anglophone Canadians are now spending almost a third of their time online watching video, according to a report by the Media Technology Monitor.

In a survey with 4,009 English-speaking Canadians conducted between Oct. 7 and Dec. 1 of last year, about 75 per cent of the respondents said they watched some online video monthly.

Two-thirds of them said they regularly watched videos on YouTube, 42 per cent streamed TV content, 34 per cent sat down for full movies, 29 per cent used Netflix, and 26 per cent said they watched news and sports videos.

While mobile streaming is growing, most were still using a computer to watch online video.

About 83 per cent of those polled said they use a laptop or desktop computer to access online video, while about one in three sometimes use a smartphone and one in four stream with a tablet or Internet-connected TV.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Market Minute

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THE MOTHER OF ALL HOLIDAYS

HE SAYS

John Mazerolle
metronews.ca

Mother's Day was always a special event in my parents' household, because it meant I was attempting to be an adult on a scale I've never quite recaptured in my adulthood.

Back then I bought flowers, wrote my own cards, and picked out gifts, including a large, framed stock photo of a rose on a keyboard that would have been an amazing gift if my mother was the manager of a Super 8.

I even — and this is why it's always been the Mother of All Holidays in my mind — tried to cook.

If I were to add up the number of times in my life where I attempted to prepare a full meal, it's likely Mother's Day would be responsible for at least five of them — so around half the meals I've ever cooked have been for Mom.

That's the kind of outstanding son I am.

Now I live in a different city and, like most adult sons, I make a point on Mother's Day of letting my mother know that I exist and that I know she exists, too.

This seems to touch her deeply.

I suppose it's better than leaving bread crumbs and runny yolk on her bed sheets.

Focusing on love instead of buying something saves Mom and I from the crass commercialization of yet another Hallmark holiday, while coincidentally saving me from the high price of a Hallmark card. Mommy dearest, indeed.

I've compiled some numbers to show the big business that Mother's Day has become.

I think you'll find the stats as surprising as I did when they occurred to me in a fever dream.

A fever dream of research.

Mother's Day By The Numbers:

1: Average number of mothers per lifetime, per person in Canada.

$23.2 billion: Amount that is expected to spent on Mother's Day this year in North America.

$23.1 billion: Amount that will go to the richest 1 per cent of mothers.

63: Percentage of U.S. mothers who will get food stamps in bed.

7.2: Average number of carnations required for a mother to believe her child loves her.

890,000: Number of pre-written cards with Mother's Day poetry rhyming love, glove, dove and above.

4: Number of pre-written cards with Mother's Day poetry rhyming love and shove.

100 per cent: Amount KFC, Taco Bell and other corporations love mothers, according to their Twitter feeds.

10,000: Number of "Awww"s about to ring out around Canada.

0: Mother's better than mine.

ZOOM

Boo-boos are hard to bear

Mango, a 19-year-old male Syrian brown bear, rests on a bed as zoo veterinarians and staff prepare him for surgery in the Ramat Gan Zoological Center's animal hospital near Tel Aviv, Israel, Wednesday. The 250-kilogram bear was going into surgery to repair a herniated disc in his back after it was discovered in an X-ray. ARIEL SCHALIT/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Syrian bear goes in for surgery

In Israel, a 19-year-old Syrian brown bear named Mango underwent surgery Wednesday to repair a herniated disc, said Sagit Horowitz, a spokeswoman for the Ramat Gan Zoological Center near Tel Aviv.

Zoologists first noticed Mango had a problem when he started to show signs of paralysis in his hind legs, said Dr. Merav Shamir, who led the surgery on the furry patient.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

They've got his back

"It started acutely," said Shamir. "He wasn't able to move his right hind limb and it progressively deteriorated over the following 48 hours to become completely paralyzed on the hind limbs."

"I'm nervous now — I'll be happier in a few hours," Shamir said before the hours-long surgery began.

"I wish him luck."

Veterinarians will know in the coming weeks whether Mango makes a full recovery.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A potential lifesaver

Such procedures aren't uncommon at the Ramat Gan Zoological Center, the premier zoo of Israel. Last year, veterinarians there used acupuncture to cure the chronic ear infection of a 14-year-old Sumatran tiger.

- Shamir said other bears with a similar disc problem have been euthanized. The surgery Mango underwent is novel for bears, though it's often performed on small dogs.

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MetroTube

Watch this guy touch the sky

ANDREW FIFIELD
metronews.ca

Fighter pilot tends to join gigs like astronaut and race car driver on the list of cool jobs many of us, at least once, said we'd have when we grew up.

Of course, life intervened and shuffled most of the many onto other career tracks while the few stuck it out long enough to achieve the white-knuckle life.

We don't know if the younger version of photographer Blair Bunting had similar dreams, but at least he got to take to the skies in a USAF Thunderbirds F-18 for one day. And his cooler-than-ice handling of it was all captured on rather dizzying video.

SCREENGRAB

(Via Jaron Schneider on YouTube)

metro

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Magical Mary Poppins finds her way to Theatre Calgary

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Musical production has been a hit with kids and adults alike

BACKSTAGE PASS
Lisa Wilton
calgary@metronews.ca

When Mary Poppins lands at Theatre Calgary this Friday, she won't be the same character Julie Andrews made famous.

Actor Blythe Wilson, who stars in the title role, says as much as she loves Andrews' performance in the 1964 Disney classic, she took her inspiration from the original eight Mary Poppins children's novels by P.L. Travers.

"I re-read all the books and that really, really helped me get into the character and create my own Mary Poppins," says Wilson.

"Hats off to Julie Andrews, though. She's certainly what we envision when we think of Mary. But (director) Michael (Shamata) has really allowed for more of the character of the book to come through in my performance, which I'm grateful for."

Quoted

"I re-read all the books and that really, really helped me get into the character and create my own Mary Poppins."
Blythe Wilson, who plays the title role

Blythe Wilson stars in Theatre Calgary's production of the musical Mary Poppins, which opens Friday at the Max Bell Theatre. LISA WILTON

The story of a mysterious nanny who arrives at the London home of Mr. and Mrs. Banks to care for their four children remains hugely popular 80 years after the first book was published.

The co-production between Theatre Calgary and Edmonton's Citadel Theatre blends elements from the books with favourite songs from the movie version, including Supercalifragilistic-expialidocious, A Spoonful of Sugar and Chim Chim Cher-ee.

It recently wrapped a successful run in Edmonton and is selling well in this city.

Much of the feedback, Wilson explains, has been from adults surprised at how much the story they enjoyed as a child still strikes a chord.

"A lot of them said, 'I had no idea this was going to tune into adults,'" she recalls.

"I truly believe Mary is brought to the house for Mr. Banks. It's about his story. He's lost his way. He's career-driven and very stressed about his job. And Mary, through the children and her connection to the children, helps Mr. Banks see what's most important in his life, which is his family and the love of his family … I think people do connect to the story."

It's not the first time the Vancouver-raised, New York-based actor has entered the magical world of Mary Poppins.

In 2010, she embarked on a two-year U.S. tour playing Mrs. Banks in the Disney stage production.

"I used to watch (the lead actor) and think about what it would be like to play Mary Poppins," she says.

"But I didn't think I'd be able to inhabit the character because I thought I was more at the age of the mother, so when this came along in Canada I was so thrilled to be cast."

Mary Poppins opens Friday and runs through June 15 at the Max Bell Theatre in the Arts Centre. Tickets can be purchased through theatrecalgary.com or by calling 403-294-7447.

Did you know?

Australian author P.L. Travers disapproved of many aspects of Walt Disney's musical adaptation of her books, particularly the inclusion of an animated sequence.

- Despite Travers' dislike of the film, it was a hit and one of its most memorable tunes, Chim Chim Cher-ee, won an Academy Award for Best Original Song.

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Remembering a Canadian storyteller

Farley Mowat.
Author was outspoken about many social, environmental issues

Canadian author Farley Mowat, a master storyteller and tireless defender of nature and wildlife, has died at age 92, his assistant confirmed Wednesday.

From the time he was 13, Mowat was fiercely dedicated to writing about the natural world. As a young teen he started a magazine called Nature Lore and had a column in the Saskatoon Star Phoenix.

He went on to write some 40 books, many based on his own adventures and travels. He said he was lucky to be able to combine his two passions, writing and nature, calling it "the only subject I really want to write about."

Throughout his life, Mowat was adamant that humans learn to live in harmony with the natural world.

"It's a matter of survival," he told The Canadian Press in a 2006 interview. "Either we learn to do this, or we cease to exist. We have no God-given right to survive forever. We have screwed up so badly in so many ways so obviously that only utterly stupid species would consider that we have much of a future, as things stand.

"Only by recognizing how far off track we've gone are we likely to be able to recover our footing and carry on."

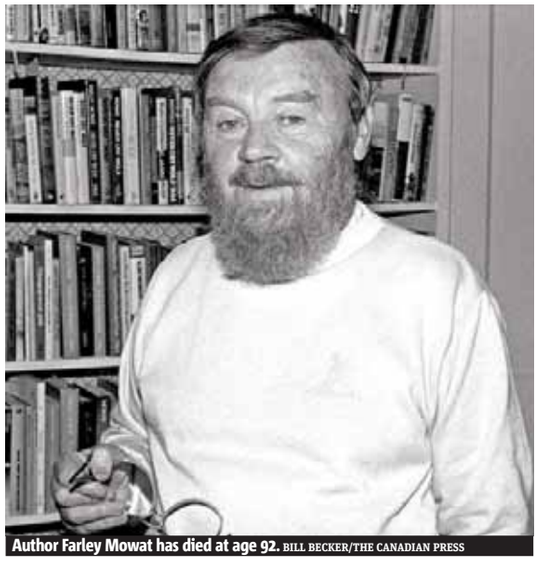
One of his most famous books, Never Cry Wolf, is said to have changed the way people saw wolves; after the Russian version was published, the government there even banned the killing of one of Mowat's favourite creatures.

Mowat was born in Belleville, Ont., in 1921. The son of a librarian, he grew up in Windsor, Ont., and Saskatoon. He studied at the University of Toronto. His novels and other nonfiction works have been translated into more than 20 languages.

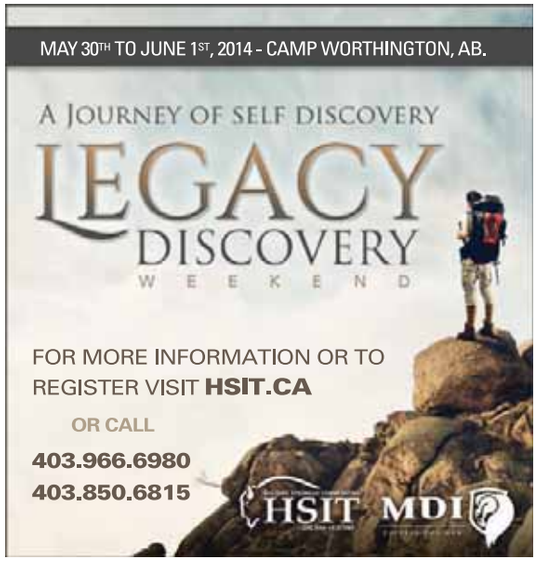
A remarkable storyteller, Mowat said the pleasure he got from writing was paramount.

"My motives have been selfish in a peculiar way," he said, "not to attempt to gain recognition, fame, to become an icon, to become a Conrad Black or somebody like that, but simply to satisfy my own appetite for good stories."

He was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Medal in 1956, the Governor General's Award for Lost in the Barrens in 1956, the Leacock Medal for Humour for The Boat Who Wouldn't Float in 1970, the Order of Canada in 1981 and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the International Fund for Animal Welfare in 2003. THE CANADIAN PRESS



Author Farley Mowat has died at age 92. BILL BECKER/THE CANADIAN PRESS



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METRO DISH

OUR TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

George Clooney ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

Just call him groomzilla? George is set on walking down the aisle this fall

If you think George Clooney's surprise engagement to Amal Alamuddin came quickly, just wait until the save-the-date cards go out. Clooney is reportedly wasting no time in tying the knot, with a fast-approaching wedding date, according to Radar Online.

"The wedding is to take place in September," a source says. "They've told family and friends they will only disclose the location at the last minute, and it will be very private. Neither George nor Amal want the wedding to be a public affair — and her family doesn't, either."

And the wedding isn't the only bit of planning on the fast track, as Clooney and Alamuddin "definitely want kids ASAP," the source says.

Biebs cozies up to Miami model after spotting her on Instagram

Justin Bieber's on-again, off-again relationship with Selena Gomez must really be off again, as the pop star apparently has been cozying up to 18-year-old Miami-based model Yovanna Ventura, according to E! News.

Bieber apparently first spotted Ventura on Instagram and reached out to her, meeting up with her when he was in Miami in April and then this month in Las Vegas before heading to L.A., where they were spotted acting "like a couple" on the Venice Beach boardwalk.

Justin Bieber

The Word

Tabloid pays price for J.K. Rowling 'sob story' claim

A British tabloid has apologized and paid damages to Harry Potter author J.K. Rowling over an article about her time as a single mother.

Rowling brought a libel case against the Daily Mail after it alleged in an article in September that she told a false "sob story" on how people at her church stigmatized and taunted her for being a single mother on welfare. The newspaper report was based on an essay Rowling wrote for a charity describing her experiences some 20 years ago.

The paper printed an apology Wednesday stating that Rowling in fact did not make any false claims. The paper said it had agreed to pay "substantial damages" and legal costs to Rowling, who will donate the money to charity. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Miley Cyrus

Miley recovering from sudden illness with 'crazy honey and lavender'

Miley Cyrus is just fine, y'all. The Wrecking Ball singer resumed her world tour in London after a sudden illness landed her in the hospital and caused her to cancel dates for three weeks.

But before she took to the stage, Cyrus wanted to make sure everyone knew that reports she'd suffered a drug overdose were false. "I didn't have a drug overdose. I took some s—ty antibiotics that a doctor gave me for a sinus infection and I had a reaction," she said at a press conference at London's O2 Arena before her return performance. "I'm feeling good, I'm alive — so that's f—ing awesome. I'm the poster child for good health." She's even taken drastic steps to maintain her health: "I'm on this crazy vitamin rush and crazy honey and lavender. I learned a lot about taking care of myself."

Twitter

@JamesFrancoTV
"50 shades of batman and robin w/ Spider-Man"

@pattonoswalt
Totally just saw the green dragon from GAME OF THRONES drinking at Little Dom's.

@oliviawilde
This year, instead of attending the "Met Ball", I leaked milk, and ate an entire napkin while inhaling a felafel.

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See that symbol? It means you can scan this photo with your Metro News app to see a video montage of Lindsay Ellingson strutting her stuff on the Victoria's Secret runway.

Tips from the lips of an Angel

Model management. From hot-power yoga sessions to facial massages for breakouts, Lindsay Ellingson shares all her tricks

ROMINA MCGUINNESS
Metro World News

We've all had those moments: You want to get rid of bloat in a week's time for a big event or need to turn your complexion around in 24 hours for a big job interview. With a long list of big-time catwalks including Chanel, Chloé and Prada, and five years as a Victoria's Secret Angel under her belt, model Lindsay Ellingson has become a master at solving a beauty problem quickly. She reveals some of her tricks for looking fresh:

Start on the inside

"You can just tell when a girl looks sick or is too thin. I get light-headed and my energy fades. It's good to eat lots of clean, hearty meals so that you're not starving yourself — something like chicken, sweet potato and broccoli. I don't like putting food in my body that makes me feel toxic, so I always carry almonds in my purse. I'll eat a cheeseburger if I want one, but I'll just balance it out with a green juice. I eat less sugar, it just helps my skin glow and stops my energy levels from spiking."

Put the Starbucks runs on pause

"I love cold-pressed, iced black coffee but caffeine is dehydrating so I drink Kusmi Detox tea instead."

CONTRIBUTED

Add some heat to your yoga

"I've been doing hot power yoga four times a week and feel more toned than ever. It's not as hot as Bikram — I tried that once and almost passed out! Be in tune with your body and listen to it — if you're tired, it's OK to rest."

Hydrate well, inside and out, to fake a solid night's sleep

"I need about nine hours of sleep but I've learned to function with much less. I would fly overnight to Milan, arrive in the morning and go straight to 14 appointments — that's your job. So I started to sleep with an eye mask or take some melatonin (during flights). And drink lots of water. When you wake up dehydrated, your skin feels horrible. So I would put on the SKYN Iceland Hydra Cool Firming Eye Gels, roll an ice cube around my eye zone and spritz my face with the Heritage Store Rose Petals Rosewater — it helps me look awake"

When all else fails, copy the makeup artists

"I've definitely arrived super tired and broken out on the last day of the Paris shows. Thankfully the makeup artists are amazing when it comes to erasing signs of fatigue. They'll give a face massage using the Embryolisse Lait-Crème Concentré face cream to increase the blood flow to your face and use eye drops for extra sparkle. I also like to use Ling Drying Lotion on a pimple at night and it'll be gone by the time you wake up."

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Cures to 3 common backyard woes

Yard acts to follow.
A little lattice, some water and a raised bed are simply remedies for the backyard blues

Backyard trends may come and go but some yard headaches will never go away. While there will always be tasks like grass cutting that have to be done, there are common backyard problems that can be solved once and for all. Tackling any of these three dilemmas will be a vital step towards achieving backyard perfection.

Problem: AC unit sticks out like a sore thumb

Solution: That AC unit isn't going anywhere, so the best solution is to camouflage it as best as possible. A simple lattice screen around the unsightly box will do wonders to eliminate the eyesore, and you can even plant some growing vines at the base to further hide the unit. Make sure to leave room around it for proper airflow and to trim any plants regularly to keep your AC working all summer long.

Desperate Landscapes

For more advice on how to make your backyard the envy of the neighbourhood, tune in to Desperate Landscapes, Thursdays at 10 p.m. ET/PT on DIY Network Canada.

Problem: City and car noise ruins the backyard Zen factor

Solution: Ponds and fountains are more than just eye candy. They provide a soothing sound that is not only relaxing but will help drown out traffic noise or other city racket. Don't focus too much on the fountain's size, but where it will be placed. Even a small waterfall can be effective if it's placed close to a popular seating area. Depending on the setup and location, it may be necessary to have an electrician install an outdoor outlet for the pump.

Problem: Kids and pets are trampling the garden

Solution: Allowing kids and pets to enjoy the yard shouldn't mean the destruction of a manicured garden or luscious vegetable patch. To keep your hard work from being damaged by an exercising dog or an errant soccer ball, create a raised flower bed a few feet off the ground. Whether using bricks or wood as the frame, this project can be completed on the weekend with no previous DIY experience, and it doesn't require any expensive tools.

Turn on the waterworks

Ponds and fountains are more than just eye candy. They provide a soothing sound that is not only relaxing but will help drown out traffic noise and other city rackets.

Even a small fountain or waterfall can turn a noisy yard into a Zen garden. ISTOCK

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Plum-struck makeover

Colour creates a living room with style. One reader with just a sofa gets some affordable decor suggestions

DESIGN CENTRE
Karl Lohnes
home@metronews.ca

Q: My small living room has a new sofa with neutral wood floors and walls. I'd like the room to have some colour added but look relaxed and organic. — Trisha, via email

A: Start by choosing another neutral colour to help accent the beige tones in the room.

I suggest a soft stone-purple colour; it comes in many tones and layering it will give it an organic look.

A patterned area rug will help add some life to the room while adding a statement chair will help to define the new colour in the room.

If introducing more of the warm beige colour, then bring it into the room with texture — you have more than enough smooth beige filling the room!

Here's a storyboard of products that I think would enhance your living room without breaking the bank.

BEFORE: A beige room needs some colour and accessories

Magic carpet

Tie-dyed patterns create an organic look while incorporating all the colours of the room. All wool 8x10-foot carpet, $460, eCarpetGallery.com

Wing it

A tall fashionably coloured chair is perfect in the corner of the room. Luxe Wind Chair, $1925, CrateAndBarrel.com

Jute your fancy

It's a footrest or place to perch. Jute rope Pier Pouf, $129, UrbanBarn.com

Paint perfect

A focal wall of colour painted behind the sofa will add drama to the all-beige room. Cinnamon Slate 2113-40, BenjaminMoore.ca

Grain power

Two organic images printed on birch wood veneer hung side-by-side would be the perfect proportion over the long sofa. Old Wood 28x36-inch print, $249, WestElm.com

Feather your nest

Modern and natural style pillow with long feathers printed on velvet. Micro Velvet Feather Cushion, $15, Simons.ca

'Round the table

Simple in form yet with the look of a well-travelled accessory, this table adds exotic flair. Moroccan Coffee Table, $399, PotteryBarn.com

ALL PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

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Palestinian bites

This recipe serves four. STEVE PAINTER

Chicken, Onions and Sumac with Pitta Bread. These bites are served as a street snack by tucking the ingredients into a pouch

Ingredients

- 2 tbsp olive oil with a knob/pat of butter
- 2 onions, sliced
- 2-3 garlic cloves, crushed
- 700 g (1 3/4 lbs) chicken breasts, cut into bite-size strips
- 2-3 tsp ground sumac
- 1 tsp crushed cardamom seeds
- 1-2 tsp baharat mix
- freshly squeezed juice of 1 unwaxed lemon
- 2 tbsp toasted pine nuts
- a small bunch of fresh flatleaf parsley, finely chopped
- sea salt and black pepper
- 4 pita breads, halved cross-ways to form 8 pockets
- 4 generous tbsp thick yogurt
- baking sheet, lightly oiled

1. Preheat the oven to 180 C (350 F)

2. Heat olive oil and butter in a heavy-based pan and stir in the onions. When they begin to soften, add garlic and fry until the onions turn golden brown.

3. Add the chicken and cook for 2–3 minutes, before stirring in most of the sumac, cardamom and baharat mix.

4. Add the lemon juice and cook gently until the chicken is tender but still juicy. Toss in most of the pine nuts and parsley and season to taste with salt and pepper.

5. Place the pita halves on the prepared baking sheet. Pop them in the preheated oven for about 10 minutes to toast them. Fill the toasted pouches with the chicken mixture, top each one with a dollop of yogurt and scatter the reserved sumac, pine nuts and parsley over the top. Serve immediately.

RECIPES FROM FLAVORS OF THE MIDDLE EAST BY GHILLIE BASAN (RYLAND PETERS AND SMALL, $35.95; RYLANDPETERS.COM)

Cookbook of the Week

A culinary Middle Eastern trek

Flavours of the Middle East by Ghillie Basan showcases dishes you would encounter should you travel the ancient lands of the region. With feature spreads profiling the essential ingredients and more than 60 authentic recipes, the book makes it easy to prepare exotic fare at home. You'll start with appetizers like Hot Hummus with Samna, make your way to main courses with Poached Fish with Saffron, throw in some veggies like Fried Carrot and Fennel and end with sweets like Noah's Pudding. METRO

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Middle East snacking

This Halloumi with Figs, Olives and Zahtar recipe serves four people. STEVE PAINTER

"Salty and firm, halloumi is a fairly versatile cheese from the eastern Mediterranean. In Lebanon, Syria, and Cyprus (Turkish and Greek) it is made with cow's milk and matured in whey, sometimes combined with nigella seeds, mint or thyme," writes Ghillie Basan in Flavours of the Middle East.

Ingredients

- 3-4 tbsp olive oil
- 250 g (8 oz) plain halloumi, well rinsed and cut into thin, bite-size slices
- 4-6 dried figs, cut into thin slices
- 2 tbsp crinkled, fleshy black olives
- 1-2 tbsp grape or date molasses
- 1-2 tbsp zahtar
- a sprinkling of sea salt
- 1 lime, cut into quarters

1. Heat the oil in a heavy-based saucepan. Add the halloumi and fry for 4–5 minutes until golden-brown all over. Drain on paper towels.

2. Tip the halloumi onto a serving dish, scatter the sliced figs and olives over and around it and drizzle the grape molasses over the top. Sprinkle with zahtar and a little salt to taste and serve immediately.

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PREP FOR A HASSLE-FREE NIGHT

PLANNING IS KEY BEFORE YOU GO OUT

Has it been awhile since you have had a mom's night out? Or maybe you just became a mom and this is your first evening getaway sans baby.

Either way, take some time to get things ready before you slip on your heels. That way you won't have to worry mid-entrée about what's going on at home!

Here is what you need to do to get things in order for your mom's night out.

BABYSITTER CHECK
Line up your babysitter as soon as you have got a date for your big night out. Veteran moms know to cultivate a list of sitters to call on if one can't make it on a specific night.

Also, see if you can confirm times with them when you book them. How early can they come? How late can they stay? And do you need to drive them home?

PREPPING YOUR KIDS
Despite the many demands your little ones make for play dates, they are likely to balk when it comes time to tell them you are heading out on a play date of your own. Give your kids plenty of warning — think a few days ahead — and provide them with all of the reassurances they need that you are coming back at the end of the night and that they will see you in the morning.

SET UP EMERGENCY PLANS
That includes writing out phone numbers for the sitter, lining up an emergency contact in case they can't get a hold of you, and setting aside the children's health cards. If you can do this a day ahead, it's one more thing taken care of as you head out the door.

DON'T FORGET ABOUT YOURSELF!
Use this night out as an opportunity to pamper yourself a bit if you can. At best, go for a facial and massage treatment at a spa before you meet your girlfriends. At the least, get a bang trim or overall hair trim if you can swing it, or a home manicure and pedicure. Tip: See if the sitter can come a bit early, even to allow you the freedom to get ready without little fists pounding on your bedroom door.

Your checklist for a memorable evening out

Like prepping to head out for a play date, getting ready for a mom's night out takes a little bit of work.

Here is what you should have at the ready to make sure you have a memorable night out.

CELLPHONE: You may want to FaceTime your kids good night via your sitter's phone, you may not. At the least, it's a way to get a hold of you should a (rare) emergency happen.

LIP GLOSS: Look for a purse-sized gloss to discreetly slick on between events — think after dinner, but before dancing with the girls. Also handy: Blotting sheets to soak up shine; eyeliner; and a sample-sized perfume to keep you smelling sweet all night.

CASH: Credit can be king, but a little cash on hand goes a long way if you are hopping into a cab, tipping a waiter or, better yet, a bartender.

CARDS: You know if you don't bring identification, this will be the night you get ID'd when you order your vodka cranberry. So tuck it into your wallet just in case, along with your health card — again, just in case. Tip: Leave your children's health cards at home with the sitter in case something happens and she needs to hand them over to a first responder.

FLATS: Not used to wearing three-inch stilettos anymore, are you? Tuck a small pair of foldable ballet flats such as CitySlips or Damn Heels into your purse for end-of-the-night tired tootsies.

KEYS: The last thing you want is to have to ring your doorbell or pound on the front door to wake up the house to get back into your home.

metro

MOTHER'S DAY GIFT GUIDE

Thursday, May 8, 2014

Mom deserves special thought

KATHY BUCKWORTH
For Metro

Take extra time and think about what you are going to get your mom for Mother's Day. SHUTTERSTOCK

Mother's Day is supposed to be a day of celebration and gift giving — everything from handmade cards from the kids, to more expensive glittery items from grateful dads.

But some gifts can cause more stress and guilt than joy. Things like:

• The workout equipment/gym clothes/personal training sessions for the mom who hasn't had the chance or inclination to work out for a number of years. The reminder that she needs to get off the couch can be a harsh one. Suggest instead a bike ride or a family hike.

• A new blender/mixer/toaster oven or other small appliance for the mom who really doesn't want to spend any more time in the kitchen than she already does. This is going to make her feel bad about cluttering up the counter and not using the appliance.

• Gift cards are a terrific choice if mom likes to visit and shop at that particular place, but not if it is a hassle for her to get there with the kids. Think before choosing (giftofchoice.ca has a huge selection).

• A spa treatment sounds wonderful, but isn't for everyone. Not all women enjoy spa treatments to begin with, and those who do often can't indulge because they can't find a sitter for the kids or time in their schedule. Make sure the treatment is wanted, book the sitter, and get it in her schedule so she doesn't feel the gift card expiry guilt.

• Clothing can be tricky for those who aren't used to buying it for someone else. If you get a size too small you might be inferring she needs to lose weight; a size too big could mean you think she is bigger than she is. Check labels and sizes of favourite clothes before shopping.

Ask for the gift of time by outsourcing your to-do list

KATIE BUGBEE
For Metro

Add delegating to mom's list of tasks. Ask for help and enjoy time spent with the kids without having to worry about work that has to be done. SHUTTERSTOCK

As moms, we often hold the very important, yet often unnoticed role of Chief Household Officer.

We keep track of calendars, homework, maintenance appointments, product-purchases, doctors, sports practices, games and play dates. We also clean, organize, cook, bake, discipline and comfort. This is often on top of another full-time job — one that actually pays bills.

And while it's all incredibly rewarding, when do we actually have time for ourselves through all this?

And when do we have time to just stop and play with our kids — without thinking of all the "work" that needs to be done? The simple answer is, we don't.

Wouldn't it be great if some of those tasks were already done? Or we could let ourselves off the hook for not doing them?

This Mother's Day, ask for the gift of time. But here's the kicker, it doesn't have to be on the actual day. This day can still be about cuddling and embracing the beautiful faces we created. Time back in our lives can be in the form of asking for an extra set of hands.

Whether those hands are attached to a child, a spouse, a parent or a hired helper, outsource a task such as weekly cleaning (get a housekeeper), laundry (ask the housekeeper or babysitter), regular date nights (hire a sitter you love) or project outsourcing (hire an organizer to take over the playroom, laundry room and pantry).

KATIE BUGBEE IS THE SENIOR MANAGING EDITOR AND RESIDENT GLOBAL PARENTING EXPERT OF CARE.COM.

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Stella & Dot Coral Cay Necklace, $104, available at stelladot.com.

Pebbled Italian Leather Bag, $189.99, available at Winners, winners.ca.

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Lemon Print Canvas Tote, $95, available at Banana Republic, bananarepublic.ca.

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A special day to pamper mom

JANINE FALCON
For Metro

We have rounded up a selection of covetable skin care, fragrance and makeup we think would go beautifully with that pretty bouquet of flowers you have already picked out for the best mother in the world.

Caudalie Polyphenol C15 packs a powerful anti-oxidant punch coupled with a potent dose of brightening vitamin C. Anti-Wrinkle Protect Fluid, $52; Serum, $66; Eye and Lip Cream, $52. All at Sephora, sephora.com.

Fresh Black Tea Instant Perfecting Mask is a deliciously cooling, hydrating whipped texture that leaves skin feeling wonderfully fresh. $88 at Sephora, sephora.com.

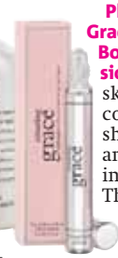
The Clarisonic Aria Cleansing System, newly available in cheerful hot pink, has three speeds for its complexion-perfecting sonic action. $225 at Hudson's Bay, Sephora and Shoppers Drug Mart. Mom's already all set with a unit? The new **Clarisonic Luxe Facial Brush Cashmere Cleanse** is a satiny-soft, dual-brush replacement head that fits all models. $36 at Sephora, sephora.com.

Diptyque Geranium Odorata is a free-spirited blend of lush geranium anchored with bergamot, green cardamom, cedar and vetiver. $118 at Holt Renfrew, holtrenfrew.com.

Yves Saint Laurent Oriental Collection Supreme Bouquet is an exotic, heady floral blend of tuberose and jasmine sambac with warm amber-woody accord. $230 at select Holt Renfrew and Hudson's Bay stores.

Les Exclusifs de Chanel Jersey Extraits is the new perfume edition of the elegant scent interpretation of the supple knit fabric Mademoiselle Chanel made chic in 1916. $200.

The limited-edition **Bellavance x Burt's Bees Lip Balm Roll** by design duo Bellavance includes two tinted balms and two shimmers. Proceeds to Pollinator Partnership of Canada. $20 at burtsbees.ca.



Philosophy Amazing Grace Firming Body Emulsion tones skin with conditioning shea butter and nourishing oils, $44. The lovely feminine floral with a hint of musk now comes in a purse-friendly **Perfume Roll-On**, $25. Both at Sephora, sephora.com.

St. Tropez Self Tan Luxe Dry Oil bestows skin with a gorgeous, subtle gleam, delicate scent, and a fresh-off-the-yacht sun-kissed glow with daily use. $60 at Sephora, sephora.com.

WaySpa gift cards help give mom some much deserved spa-pampering time. Added genius — digital versions are an option if you have left your shopping a bit late. Available at wayspa.com.

Clockwise, from left: Bellavance x Burt's Bees Lip Balm Roll, $20; WaySpa gift cards; Fresh Black Tea Instant Perfecting Mask, $88; Les Exclusifs de Chanel Jersey Extraits, $200; Yves Saint Laurent Oriental Collection Supreme Bouquet, $230; Clarisonic Aria Cleansing System, $225; St. Tropez Self Tan Luxe Dry Oil, $60; Diptyque Geranium Odorata, $118; Philosophy Amazing Grace Firming Body Emulsion, $44; and Caudalie Polyphenol C15 Anti-Wrinkle Protect Fluid, $52, Serum, $66, Eye and Lip Cream, $52.

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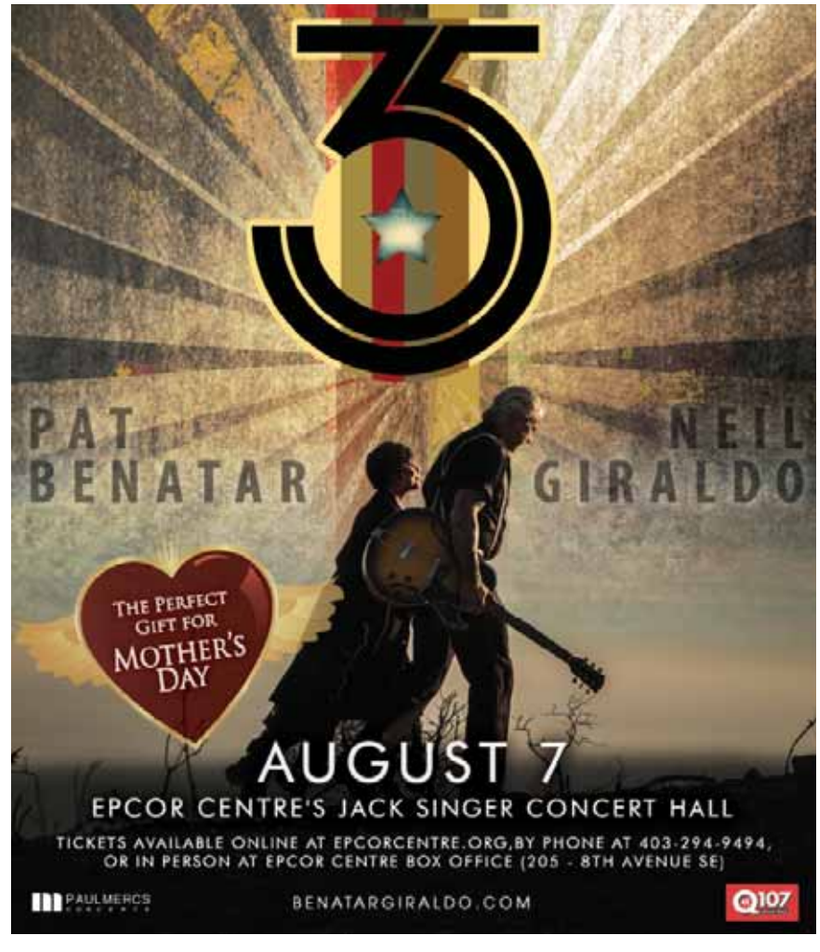
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Jazz up the tired bouquet

Customized creations.
Some shops can make unoriginal gift special with crystals or into personalized animal

MANISHA KRISHNAN
For Metro

Flowers are a Mother's Day staple for a reason: They're beautiful.

But they're also admittedly not the most original gift idea. But fear not, there are plenty of ways to spruce up mom's bouquet this year, and some of them don't even involve plants.

Becky De Oliveira, creative director and owner of Toronto's Blush & Bloom Flower Studio, suggests choosing a unique vessel for a floral arrangement.

"Antique crystal or China, brass, or anything that she can reuse afterward and perhaps add to a collection," she said. For an extra DIY flair, grab local blooms by stem and arrange them yourself.

Other tips from De Oliveira include choosing blooms that are in season — tulips, hyacinth, flowering branches — mixing up varieties and textures and adding lots of greenery.

Toy Florist, located in Toronto, creates customized flower arrangements in the shape of any animal. CONTRIBUTED

Over at Toy Florist in Toronto, you can create a bouquet in the likeness of a teddy bear or a dog, cat, whale — pretty much any other animal that mom adores. Arrangements are made out of fresh flowers, typically chrysanthemums.

"Most people have not received a present like this before, so it's the first time they get a teddy bear made of flowers and they'll remember it," said owner Adalat Aliyev.

The arrangements stay fresh for up to two weeks and can be customized depending on personal preferences.

Tara Murney offers more permanent keepsakes with her blinged-out creations.

Murney's company, the Bouquet House, specializes in "alternative bouquets" made out of fabric and jewelry. Crepe paper and silk can be transformed into tulips, roses, peonies and adorned with brooches, feathers, fabric, seashells, buttons and Swarovski crystals.

"Anything you hand me, I can make into a beautiful bouquet," said Murney.

Murney, a wedding planner by trade, said people tend to spend a lot of money on flowers that die, unlike her bouquets.

"It's a keepsake. You can put it on display at home, you can keep it forever, you can incorporate your own jewelry or pieces from your mother."

There's no limit to personalization either. Murney can use colours with significance or engrave sterling silver pieces with quotes or initials and hang them off the bouquet.

Make a gift, like when you were little

When Brittany Hopkins was trying to think of a name for her jewelry boutique, there was really only one that made sense.

"My grandma is such an inspiration for me," said Hopkins, who settled on Anice Jewellery, named after her stylish matriarch.

"She's a very fearless woman with her style and expression."

Hopkins grew up in Edmonton, watching her grandmother wear huge statement pieces and things that didn't match at all but still looked amazing.

Now at her Kensington Market shop in Toronto, Hopkins is helping others create those perfect, one-of-a-kind pieces to honour the women in their lives. It's particularly perfect for Mother's Day.

Far from a run-of-the-mill jewelry store, Anice is based on the idea of mixing old and new. Items from a "treasure drawer," including vintage pendants, trinkets, fabric, hardware and anything the customer brings in from home are mixed with new chains, beads and stones. Have an old family heirloom or a broken brooch that's been sitting around forever? Hopkins can give them new life in the form of a necklace, bracelet or earrings.

Anice Jewellery mixes family trinkets with new finds. CONTRIBUTED

Mom makes everyone in the family shine. Now it's her turn. CONTRIBUTED

For an extra personal Mother's Day gift, one can assemble a piece and attach to it a brass or silver tag engraved with a meaningful word, phrase or initials. There are also sterling silver heart rings that can be stamped.

Or bring in a piece of jewelry that's special to mom and have it reworked into something new.

MANISHA KRISHNAN

St. Louis Blues

Hitchcock inks 1-year extension

The St. Louis Blues have extended coach Ken Hitchcock's contract through next season, though there will be some staff changes.

Assistant coaches Brad Shaw and Ray Bennett also will return. A third assistant coach, Gary Agnew, and goaltending coach Corey Hirsch are not being retained.

The 62-year-old Hitchcock led the Blues to a franchise-record 52 victories this season and has taken them to the playoffs all three of his seasons. He's 124-55-20, a franchise-best .673 winning percentage, and is seventh on the NHL career list with 657 wins. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

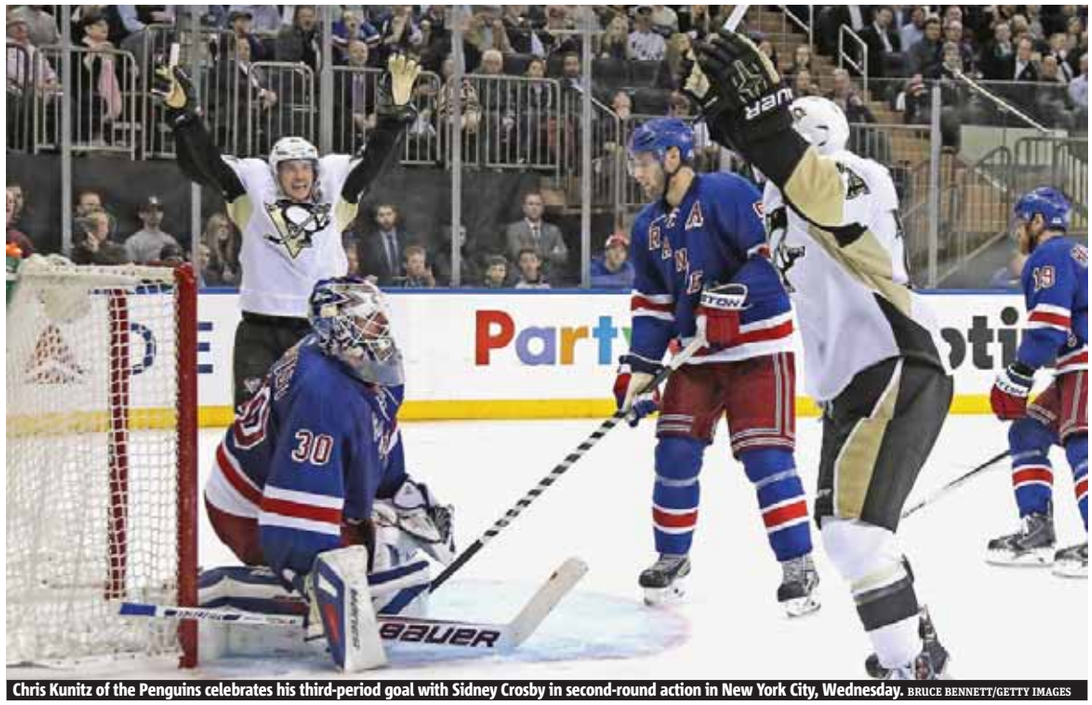
Philadelphia Flyers

Ex-goalie Hextall named Philly GM

Ron Hextall got his "dream job."

Hextall was promoted to general manager by the Philadelphia Flyers on Wednesday to replace Paul Holmgren, who was elevated to president. Hextall is Philadelphia's all-time winningest goalie and served as assistant GM last year.

"When I was done playing 15 years ago, my next goal was to become a general manager," Hextall said. "I've been very fortunate to work under Bobby Clarke, Paul Holmgren, and Dean Lombardi out in Los Angeles — three very good people but also three very astute people who I took a lot of lessons from the last 15 years." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Chris Kunitz of the Penguins celebrates his third-period goal with Sidney Crosby in second-round action in New York City, Wednesday. BRUCE BENNETT/GETTY IMAGES

Poised Penguins pull away from Rangers

NHL playoffs. Rangers pushed to brink of elimination despite beating goalie twice

Game 4

Penguins	Rangers
4	2

The Pittsburgh Penguins have had so much success at Madison Square Garden, they might not have to make a return trip to Broadway until next season.

Brandon Sutter scored a short-handed goal to break a second-period tie, and the Penguins rode that momentum to move within one win of the Eastern Conference finals with a 4-2 victory over the New York Rangers on Wednesday night.

Pittsburgh, which has won three straight following a series-opening loss, can advance with a Game 5 victory at home Friday night.

"We know they are going to be desperate," Penguins captain Sidney Crosby said. "They have a lot of depth, and a lot of guys that can create things, so we have to have the same mentality that we had."

The Penguins turned a tied series into a 3-1 lead at the Garden, where they have won seven of nine and are 12-4 since Dan Bylsma became their coach. Overall, Pittsburgh is 19-5 against the Rangers in the playoffs and 9-2 in New York.

On Wednesday, Evgeni Malkin scored 2:31 in, and Jussi Jokinen made it 3-1 at 7:02 of the third before the teams traded late goals.

"This is not the ideal night for us," Rangers forward Brad Richards said. "The good thing is ... we're still in it. We win Game 1, we are on top of the world. You lose three in a row, and as quick as it went that way it can go right back.... We want to try to bring it back here.... You never know what can happen." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

4 SPORTS

MLB

Buehrle first to six wins after Jays pound Phillies

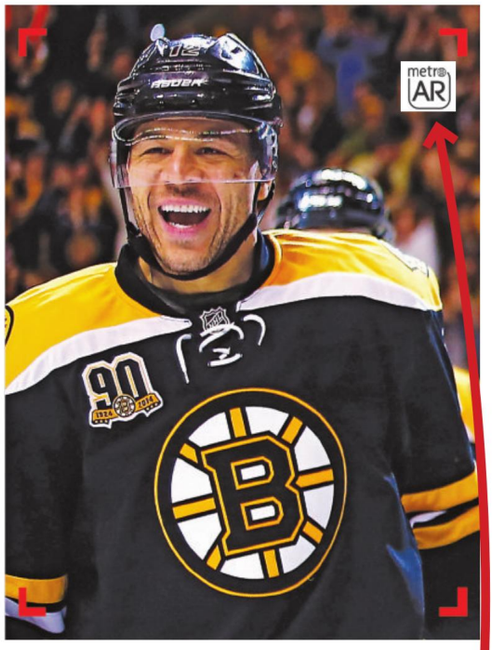
Mark Buehrle became the first six-game winner in the majors, Edwin Encarnacion hit a three-run home run and the Toronto Blue Jays won their seventh straight over Philadelphia, beating the Phillies 10-0 on Wednesday night.

Erik Kratz and Juan Francisco both hit two-run homers for the Blue Jays, who blew open a pitcher's duel between Buehrle and Cliff Lee with a nine-run, 12-batter seventh inning.

Toronto won its season-high fourth straight, its longest run since an 11-game streak from June 11-23, 2013.

Mark Buehrle
GETTY IMAGES

Buehrle (6-1) allowed three hits in seven innings to lower his ERA to 1.91. He walked two and struck out six. Sergio Santos worked the eighth and Chad Jenkins finished. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Metro poll: The cup-less vets

After 18 seasons in the NHL, Jarome Iginla is hoping to hoist his first Stanley Cup with the Boston Bruins. Scan the image with the Metro News app to pick which veteran you want to see win hockey's top prize. JARED WICKERHAM/GETTY IMAGES

Pacers centre Roy Hibbert shoots over the Wizards' Nene on Wednesday night in Indianapolis, Ind. ANDY LYONS/GETTY IMAGES

Hibbert thumps his slump in a big way

NBA. Pacers centre rebounds from scoreless game to help team even series

Big Roy came up with a big answer for his critics and his teammates Wednesday night.

He played like an All-Star when the Pacers really needed it.

After 48 hours of questions and criticism, Roy Hibbert scored a season-high 28 points, grabbed nine rebounds, blocked two shots and altered a handful of others to help the Pacers get even in the Eastern Conference semifinals with an 86-82 victory over Washington.

Hibbert sounded more relieved than redeemed.

"David (West) always talks to me about being the person that rescues yourself when you're in the middle of the ocean," Hibbert said after Indiana tied the best-of-seven series at 1-1. "There's nobody who can throw a lifesaver or a rope out to help you. So I had to do it myself."

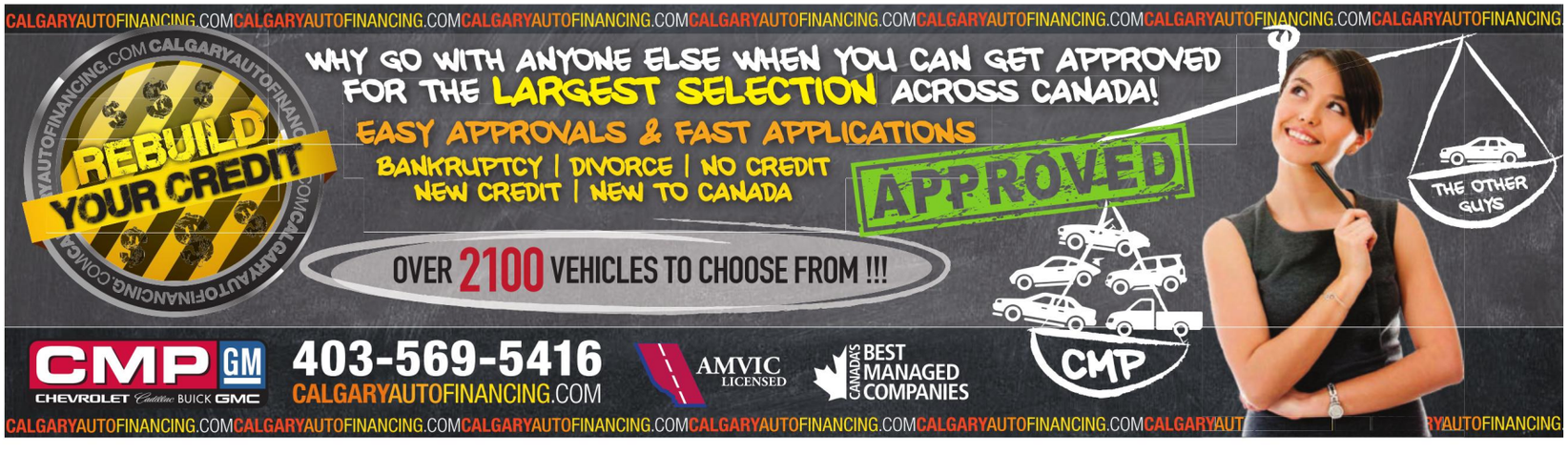
The next step is proving he can play this way again Friday when Washington hosts Game 3.

Hibbert went into Wednesday with a combined total of 37 points and 24 rebounds in Indiana's first eight playoff games. Twice in the previous four he failed to score a point or grab a rebound.

"I just want to string a few games together," he said. "Consistency hasn't been my biggest friend this year. I'm going to try to continue to play aggressive and I'm going to try to control the things I can control." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Thunder 112, Clippers 101

Russell Westbrook had a triple-double, MVP Kevin Durant fell one assist short and the Oklahoma City Thunder beat the Los Angeles Clippers 112-101 on Wednesday night to tie their Western Conference semifinal series at one win apiece. Westbrook had 31 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists to claim his third triple-double in his past five playoff games. Game 3 will be Friday in Los Angeles.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The wait is over for top college recruits

NFL. Draft is finally here with plenty of intrigue at top of board

Jadeveon Clowney just wants it to be over already.

The NFL's first May draft gave everyone a little more time to critique the prospects and try to figure out who is going where and when.

No player has been more scrutinized than Clowney, the defensive end from South Carolina whose every move has been analyzed since he ended his sophomore season with a helmet-removing hit against Michigan.

"I've been tired of it. I wish the draft was two or three weeks ago," Clowney said Wednesday after playing flag football with grammar-school kids at the NFL's Play 60 festival at a park on the west side of Manhattan.

The Houston Texans have the first pick and Clowney could be their guy. Or maybe they'll take a quarterback, such as Johnny Manziel. Or maybe they'll trade the pick.

The NFL has given fans two extra weeks to ponder these questions. The draft is usually held in April, but some scheduling conflicts at Radio City Music Hall caused the NFL to push it back. Commissioner Roger Goodell said that it's too soon to say whether May drafts are here to stay.

This year's draft finally gets underway Thursday night. Rounds 2 and 3 are Friday night. It concludes with four rounds Saturday, when there will likely be more intrigue than usual. Missouri linebacker Michael Sam, who made public that he is gay back in February, is projected to be a possible late-round selection. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Will the Houston Texans select Jadeveon Clowney with the first overall pick tonight in the NFL draft? GETTY IMAGES FILE

Seahawks. Sherman snags lucrative extension

Richard Sherman finally got the attention of being a top pick.

Standing on the stage with the spotlight directly on him and holding a Seattle jersey with his name across the back, the All-Pro cornerback became the latest player in the Seahawks secondary to be locked up for the long term.

And he's getting paid the best of anyone.

"I guess this is how it feels to be a first rounder," Sherman said.

Sherman signed a four-year contract extension Wednesday with the Seahawks, making him one of the highest-paid cornerbacks in NFL history. Sherman announced the deal will keep him in a Seahawks uniform through the 2018 season, adding the extension is for $57.4 million with $40 million guaranteed. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Richard Sherman THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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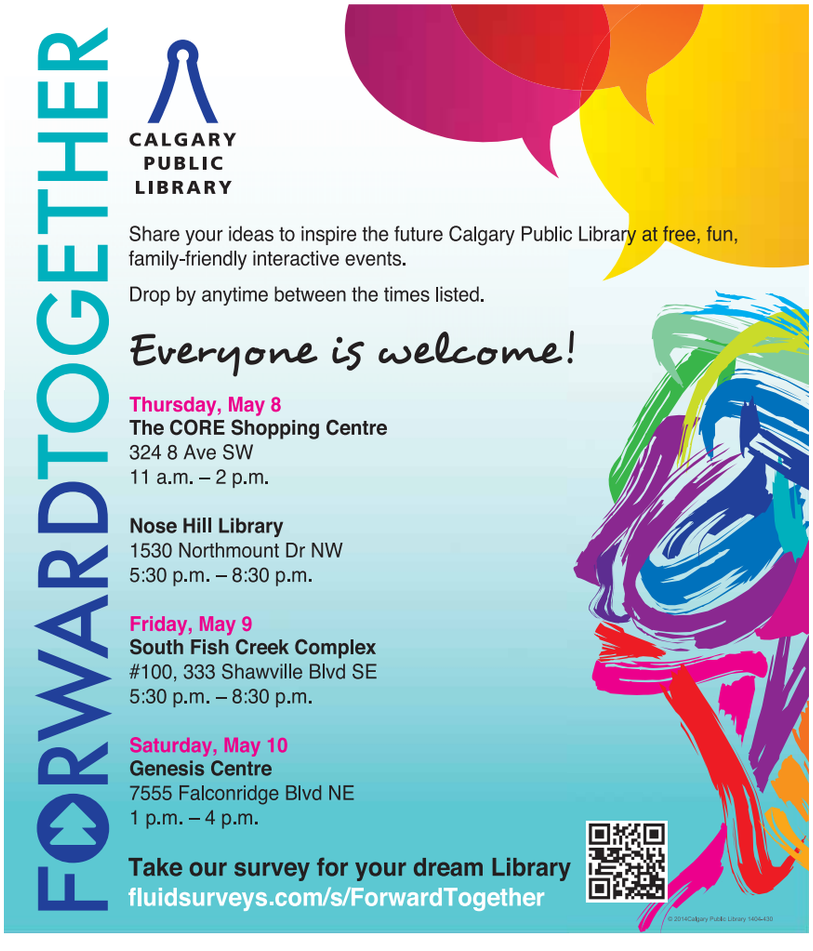
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324 8 Ave SW
11 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Nose Hill Library
1530 Northmount Dr NW
5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
Friday, May 9
South Fish Creek Complex
#100, 333 Shawville Blvd SE
5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
Saturday, May 10
Genesis Centre
7555 Falconridge Blvd NE
1 p.m. – 4 p.m.
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fluidsurveys.com/s/ForwardTogether

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Weather

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
MAX: 16° MIN: 0°	MAX: 9° MIN: 5X°	MAX: -12° MIN: -17°

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WIND MOBILE WORD SEARCH

Find the words in the word search, and use the remaining letters to solve the puzzle.

"True Mobile _ _ _ _ _ _ _."

ANSWER: Freedom

Sudoku

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved.

5	9			8	1			7
			4			8		3
				7				
	8		6				4	
		9				3		
	2				8		5	
				1				
7		4			5			
8			2	6			7	9

Yesterday's Sudoku

7	1	6	3	9	2	6	5	4
5	9	3	8	4	1	2	6	7
2	4	8	7	5	6	1	3	9
1	6	9	4	2	3	5	7	8
3	8	2	5	1	7	9	4	6
4	5	7	9	6	8	3	2	1
6	3	1	2	7	9	4	8	5
8	7	5	1	3	4	6	9	2
9	2	4	6	8	5	7	1	3

Horoscopes

♈ Aries
March 21 - April 20
You're not the kind to turn away someone who is down on their luck, but watch out you don't get conned by a sob story. Sadly not everyone is as honest as you, so check facts before thinking of parting with cash.

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
You may be a bit hesitant and suspicious today but that's okay. The thing to remember is that the cosmos is very much on your side at the moment, so you can afford to take a risk – or not, as you see fit.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
If you don't feel like socializing today, don't force yourself. You are entitled to your own space and if others find that hard to understand then they are not very smart. Give yourself some time to meditate on and plan for the future.

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
No matter what happened and who was to blame there is no point regretting what happened yesterday because you can't go back and change it. What you can do is to make tomorrow better.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
It's good that you know how to be assertive but the planets warn you must not go too far. If you break the rules over the next 24 hours, someone higher up the ladder than you will make you pay for it.

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
You have absolutely nothing to worry about but for some strange reason you have this feeling of impending disaster. Ignore it. Most likely it is just your mind playing tricks on you — and even if it isn't, what happens will be no big deal.

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Whatever else you do over the next 24 hours don't cut corners or break rules, because you won't get away with it. Resist the temptation to do anything dishonest, not just because it is dishonest but also because you really don't need to.

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
The Sun in your opposite sign of Taurus means, among other things, that you have to put up with people who annoy you. Don't be tempted to argue with them because if you do, the situation may get out of hand.

♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Don't think badly of yourself if you have to admit that you have failed to reach a target of some sort. The fact is you tried — when so many other people never even get started — and that alone makes you some kind of hero.

♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
Most things seem to be going well for you and that's good, but the planets warn you must not get too content and drift along without trying. When things are going good, you should be aiming for great.

♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
Don't worry if you lose out in some way over the next 24 hours because you will more than make up for it later in the month. If something seems to be slipping from your grasp just let it go. Change is always good in the long-term.

♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
Steer clear of disputes that have nothing to do with you. The more others try to draw you into an argument, the more you must keep your distance. That applies especially to friendships and money – they don't mix. **SALLY BROMPTON**

TRANSIT BINGO

Find the following items on your commute to score a **BINGO**.

B	I	N	G	O
a baby	a pop can	face piercing	a dog	groceries
a suitcase	transit worker	crazy hair colour	someone wearing purple	someone reading an ebook
someone sleeping	gum on the floor	**FREE**	someone reading a magazine	ad for a a new movie
someone blaring music	a kissing couple	cutoff jeans	someone reading a Metro	socks & sandals
a tattoo	Candy Crush	ad for a language course	sweat pants	a bus transfer

WIND MOBILE WORD SEARCH

ALBERTA
CELL
PHONE
PLAN
SPRING
USER
UNLIMITED
WIND
WITHIN
DATA
TALK
TEXT
LIKE

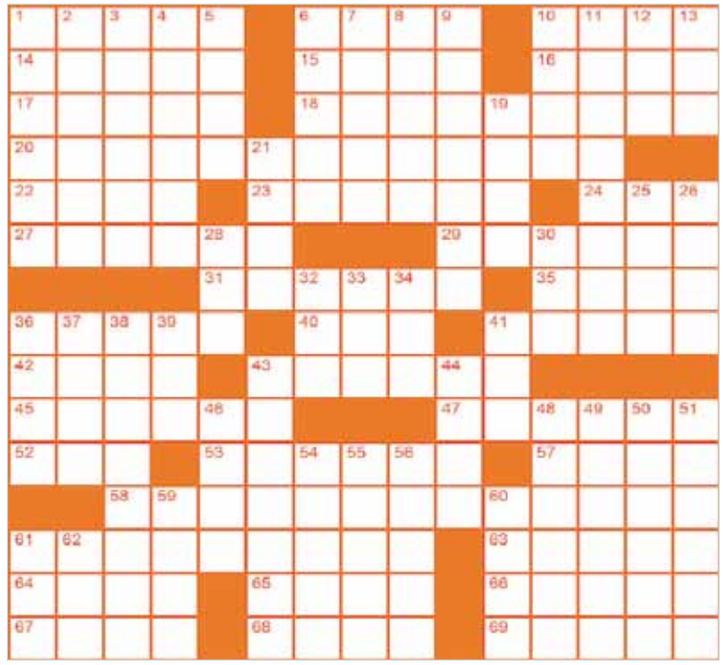
D	P	H	O	N	E	F	R
E	E	T	A	L	K	E	A
T	S	P	R	I	N	G	L
I	N	I	H	T	I	W	B
M	N	R	D	C	T	E	E
I	A	E	D	E	X	K	R
L	L	S	A	L	E	I	T
N	P	U	T	L	T	L	A
U	O	M	A	W	I	N	D

Yesterday's Crossword

Crossword: Canada Across and Down

See today's answers at metronews.ca/answers.

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



Across

1. "Hey! I bet you can't..." sayer
6. Basketball: Miami __
10. Caesar's 2101
14. Singer Ms. Cara
15. Paris pronoun
16. Mil. school
17. Georgia, for one
18. Is there any of 'it' out 'there' somewhere?: 2 wds.
20. Montreal-based UN Agency... ICAO = International __ __ Organization
22. Conniver
23. Minify
24. "Conan" cable network
27. Current
29. Official study
31. Patrick _. __ (Zoe Saldana's Canadian co-star in NBC's miniseries adaptation of #58-Across)
35. "Makes sense.": 2 wds.
36. Chesterfields
40. Ms. Hagen
41. Do additional tailoring
42. "__ cost you!"
43. Like a rose
45. Commercial area of Venice
47. Trojan hero
52. Approx.
53. Speechmaker
57. Jazz singer Ms. Fitzgerald
58. Ira Levin's 1967 scary bestseller: 2 wds.
61. Surname of the married couple portrayed by the stars at #31-Across
63. Rock band, Death Cab for __
64. 'Refer' suffix
65. _._. __ Canadian (Currency conversion choice)
66. Margarines
67. Ritzy retailer, __ Fifth Avenue
68. Swinger's supplies?
69. Never happened or existed

Down

1. __ Throw (Decathlon event)
2. Emily Carr, for one
3. Plunderer, archaically
4. Whole
5. Merry dance
6. Yo-__-ho! (Hoist, sailors, hoist!)
7. Arthur __ Awards (Crime Writers of Canada annual honours)
8. Handle
9. Shifts stableness
10. Saint-__ (1491 birthplace of French explorer Jacques Cartier)
11. Canadian apple
12. Li'l lunchtime locale
13. 'Chlor' suffix
19. Three squared
21. Alfred Hitchcock's wife played by Helen Mirren in "Hitchcock" (2012)
25. Marcia's "Desperate Housewives" role
26. From __ to stern
28. Backstreet Boys member Mr. McLean's
30. __ chart
32. "Well, obviously!"
33. _ __ Z
34. Wreck
36. "Your majesty."
37. Mr. Redding
38. Newfoundland town
39. __-inclusive
41. __ bread
43. Removed, as a newspaper story: 2 wds.
44. Not
46. "__.0", airing on MuchMusic
48. Dusty space cloud
49. Uplifts
50. Great Britain's archaic name
51. Declare, Bible-style
54. Create cheeriness
55. Flavour
56. Sweet 'sandwich' snacks
59 Venerated verses
60. Flat-bottomed vessel
61. Mr. Craven
62 "Bird __ _ Wire" (1990)

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